

10-1-2014

Smokejumper Magazine, October 2014

National Smokejumper Association

Fred Donner

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Recommended Citation

National Smokejumper Association; Donner, Fred; and Gidlund, Carl, "Smokejumper Magazine, October 2014" (2014). *Smokejumper and Static Line Magazines*. 89.
https://dc.ewu.edu/smokejumper_mag/89

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THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER
ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2014

SMOKEJUMPER



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SMOKEJUMPER, ISSUE No. 86, OCTOBER 2014
ISSN 1532-6160

Smokejumper is published quarterly by:
THE NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER ASSOCIATION
C/O 10 JUDY LANE
CHICO, CA 95926

The opinions of the writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the NSA. Permission to reproduce *Smokejumper* in any manner must first be obtained in writing.

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www.HeidelbergGraphics.com

Front cover photo: *Bob Sallee (1949) at the
rimrock Mann Gulch. (Courtesy J. Kirkley)*



Message from the President



by **Jim Cherry**
(Missoula '57)

PRESIDENT

THERE HAS BEEN some incredible "sleuthing" that has taken place since the last edition of this magazine. It was nearly 70 years ago – 1945 – that **Malvin Brown** (PNOR-45) died in the first fatality related to smokejumping.

Malvin was serving as a member of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion (the "Triple Nickles") when he died following a jump into tall timber in Oregon and his let-down was too short. For all those intervening years, we had no information on where his burial site was located.

For a most interesting read, you will want to check out the article by **Fred Donner** (MSO-59) and how it was that this mystery was finally solved. While you are checking out Fred's article, you could also go to the NSA website at www.smokejumpers.com and do further reading on the lives of those "killed in the line of duty." It's good to remember those who have paid the highest price.

A few days ago (as of this writing, in mid-July), I had a phone call providing information suggesting that the plane used to fly

Earl Cooley (MSO-40) and **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40) on the first fire jump has been discovered in Montana and it may be available for sale. If the information bears out to be accurate, such a plane could make a valuable addition to a museum. Keep tuned for more information on this.

In keeping with our mission statement and our desire to help jumpers and their families, the scholarship program offered through the NSA has continued to grow. This year we have been able to provide a total of six scholarships. Read more about those who have been awarded scholarships this year.

If scholarships are something that piques your interest, you may want to join with others who have made it a commitment to provide support of an NSA scholarship as a way of honoring or memorializing someone. If so, drop me a note or an e-mail at jimcherry@wctatel.net.

I trust that you have already received a reminder notice about the 2015 Smokejumper Reunion in Missoula that will celebrate 75 years of smokejumping. Let me bump your memory once again and ask you to mark your calendar and set aside the three days of July 17-19, 2015. Great plans are coming together that will make the event worth your time. We will keep you updated through the magazine, snail mail and the NSA website.

Sometimes folks who need help in a crisis time are hesitant to ask. Sometimes a friend needs to step forward and remind them that the NSA's Good Samaritan Fund is there, ready and willing to respond

to the needs of our smokejumper family. If you are facing a crisis and need help (or if you are one of those friends who knows of a need), please let the NSA know. You can contact any one of our board members to pass along the

circumstances of the need.

Finally, the NSA website is continuing to develop and grow with new additions and features. Keep checking it out. 📡

Lloyd Johnson Tells True Story Of Loon Lake Bomber Crash

By Bernice Karnop

(Copyright 2014, Idaho Senior Independent and Montana Senior News.)

The details of the bomber crash on Loon Lake in central Idaho Jan. 29, 1943, sounds like a TV drama.

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Smokejumper base abbreviations:

Anchorage.....ANC	GrangevilleGAC	Redding.....RDD
Boise.....NIFC	Idaho City.....IDC	Redmond.....RAC
Cave Junction.....CJ	La Grande.....LGD	West Yellowstone WYS
Fairbanks.....FBX	McCall.....MYC	Whitehorse Yukon YXY
Fort St. John.....YXJ	Missoula.....MSO	Winthrop.....NCSB

Some versions are a little too jazzed up, according to 97-year-old **Lloyd Johnson** (MYC-43). He was involved from the time the crew sent the message that they were lost in a storm and out of fuel, until all eight men were out of the wilderness and receiving treatment. He knows the true story.

Lloyd, alternate forest ranger out of McCall, heard the static-filled message. In spite of the poor radio contact, it was clear that the plane was coming down through the clouds and would attempt an emergency landing on a lake at about 6,000 feet elevation.

Lloyd grew up in McCall, Idaho, and the 27-year-old knew the backcountry. He looked at the maps and figured out where he thought they might have landed. He requested permission to ski 50 miles in to Loon Lake and attempt a rescue.

“Not on government time,” the supervisor answered.

Continued on **page 4**

Are You Going to Be “Temporarily Away”?

As more of our membership moves with the weather, we are getting an ever-increasing number of *Smokejumper* magazines returned by the post office marked “Temporarily Away.” Since we mail the magazine via bulk mail, it is not forwarded, and we are charged first class postage for its return.

If you are leaving your mailing address during the months of March, June, September and/or December, please let Chuck Sheley know. He can hold your magazine and mail it upon your return OR mail it to your seasonal address. Please help us save this triple mailing expense. Chuck’s contact information is in the information box on this page.

Another option is join our electronic mailing list. 📡



The eight men on board the B-23 Dragon Bomber survived the January 1943 wintertime crash at Loon Lake in the Payette National Forest north of McCall. (Photo courtesy of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery)

Continued from page 3

When the local bush pilot flew the mail into tiny Warren, Idaho, more than two weeks later, Lloyd asked the man if he'd go out of his way and fly over Loon Lake. Sure enough, he spotted the plane down in the trees.

The plane was a B-23 twin-engine Dragon Bomber made by Douglas Aircraft as a successor to the B-18 Bolo. The B-23s were used as patrol aircraft and training but never in overseas combat.

This one was on a routine military flight from one base to another.

Lloyd notified the military. Then, without asking permission, he asked the mail pilot to fly him in.

"I like to do things when they should be done. If you wait for government permission to do things, it's too late for it to be effective," he states.

He grabbed his survival gear, medic equipment, and some food and they were back in the air in 30 minutes. The plane was outfitted with skis instead of

wheels, but two and a half feet of fresh snow covered the frozen lake. After a tricky landing, Lloyd jumped off and the anxious pilot took off immediately.

When Lloyd got to the five survivors at the crash site, they had been 17 days without adequate food or shelter. Bewhiskered, shaggy haired, and injured, they looked more like wild men than like an aircrew.

"They were just about out of their heads," he admits.

They'd heard the military search planes flying over above the clouds but had no way of making contact. They'd given up hope and expected to die in that cold wilderness.

Lloyd learned that the plane overshot the lake and mowed down about 200 feet of trees. This dramatic logging operation sheared off the wings and landing gears, broke off the plane's nose, and shattered the bombardier's bubble on the bottom. It was so badly wrecked they couldn't stay in the crinkled fuselage.

The most serious injury was a badly broken leg, which the young medic immobilized. It later had to be amputated.

The survivors used their downed trees to build a fire and to create a makeshift shelter. The fire eventually melted into the snow and they carved out a snow cave. After five days, three of the crew decided to hike out for help.

The plane was loaded with guns and ammunition but little food. They boiled magpies and any other creature they could shoot. There were fish in the lake but they didn't have the knowledge or equipment to catch them.

Lloyd tended the men at the crash site for most of two days. Military planes dropped survival equipment and food once they knew where they were, and finally bush pilots evacuated the survivors.

"If the supervisor had let us go earlier we could have saved these fellows a lot of misery," Lloyd says today.

Once the five were evacuated Lloyd and another forest ranger took off on snowshoes in search for the three who had hiked out.

The desperate crewmembers had no skis or snowshoes and the steep, rugged terrain was covered with six feet of snow. There were slides in the canyon and they didn't dare walk on the creek for fear they would break through and get wet. They had only their flight suits and mukluk boots over oxfords, which they wrapped in parachute material. The forest rangers covered, in an hour, the distance it took the aviators a day to travel.

"It was nothing for us because we had been in the woods and knew what we were doing. We were on snowshoes and had food," Lloyd says.

The ill-prepared survivors followed Loon Creek to the Sesech River and then went up the North Fork of Lick Creek. They climbed over 8,500 foot Sesech Summit, covered with 15 feet of snow. On the other side they found an abandoned CCC camp. One man stayed there because he'd gone snow blind and had frozen his feet.

The other two stumbled on until they found a ranger guardhouse with a phone. There were iron lines that went from post to post all through the wilderness, Lloyd explains. The operator in McCall didn't answer because the lines weren't supposed to be working.

They kept calling until she finally picked up. A party from McCall rescued the three. Meanwhile Lloyd and the other searcher learned of the rescue by radio and came out a different way. They'd skied 40 miles in two days.

To this day, the fact that these flyers made it out of

this River of No Return country amazes Lloyd.

"They survived by the grace of God," Lloyd declares. "There are a lot of things that happen that way in this old world."

You might say that Lloyd survived for 97 years by the grace of God. Born in 1916, in the rough and tumble little town of McCall, he joined a rough-and-tumble Swedish family consisting of six boys, two girls, and a couple extras his parents took in. He was named Stewart Standidge Johnson, but he didn't know that until he saw his birth certificate when he went to register for the draft at the start of World War II. Everyone called him Lloyd.

One of his proudest accomplishments is pioneering the smokejumper program in Forest Service Region 4. He volunteered for the new program in 1943.

The Johnson house in McCall was "just a good holler" from the Forest Service supervisor's building. Lloyd's first job was swamping out that building. He worked on trails and phone maintenance, on lookouts, as camp tender, dispatcher, and on the fire line. At the same time, he earned his degree in Forestry from the University of Idaho in Moscow.

When the idea of smokejumping came up, many thought it was too dangerous, but Lloyd realized that it was the right way to fight fire. The jumpers could get to the fire quickly and without a long hike. They could stop a wildfire before it got out of hand. He helped develop the program and ran the Region 4 smokejumpers for 10 years.

Today he's the oldest smokejumper in the country. Last summer at the international reunion, he celebrated his 70th anniversary of starting the program in McCall, along with more than 500 in attendance. Every month more than a dozen former smokejumpers meet for coffee in Meridian.

"Once a smokejumper, always a smokejumper," he declares of this exclusive group.

Lloyd worked in special programs out of Gowen Field, Boise, during World War II. He wanted to go overseas, but instead, was chosen to train doctors how to jump out of planes and how to survive on their own. The doctors reciprocated by training him and others as medics. During summers, he fought forest fires.

Another special project involved spotting and destroying Japanese balloons that they cleverly shot into the jet stream where they were carried across the Pacific Ocean and onto the west coast. A basket beneath the balloon carried incendiaries, bombs, or whatever they thought could do harm.

The U.S. Government treated these with great secrecy. They did little harm but our government didn't

want the Japanese to know they were successful and they didn't want Americans to panic over the chance of getting bombed from the air without airplanes.

Life is challenging, according to Lloyd Johnson, but he wouldn't have it any other way. After retiring from the Forest Service, he owned retail and bulk petroleum businesses and worked as a troubleshooter for Cenex. He was married for 64 years, enjoys his children,

grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and spending time with his host of friends.

He calls the Payette National Forest near McCall the prettiest place in the world. "I've never been any place I disliked," Lloyd says, "but then I never had to live in cities like San Francisco or New York. I don't think I would have been very happy there. I wasn't raised that way." 🌲

The Search For Malvin L. Brown's Grave

by Fred Donner (Missoula '59)

On May 15, 2014, newspaperman Tony Wood and I found the grave of Pfc. Malvin L. Brown, who died on August 6, 1945, when he fell from a tree on a forest fire in Oregon. Brown was a member of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion or "Triple Nickles," an all-black unit. Nickles is not a typo but their chosen distinctive. The 555th had been deployed to northern California and Oregon in 1945 to reinforce the draft-depleted smokejumper program that was facing the Japanese balloon bomb threat. They were then trained as smokejumpers by the U.S. Forest Service. Brown was the only Triple Nickle to die and is considered the first smokejumper to die on duty. The National Smokejumper Association (NSA) and the Triple Nickles Association (TNA) became interested in recent years in finding his grave, missing since 1945, with the intention of placing a historical marker.

Our success is due to four key people. In the July 2006 *Smokejumper* magazine, **Mark Corbet** (LGD -74) published an extensive article, "The Death of Pfc. Malvin L. Brown: In the Interest of Public Welfare." **Carl Gidlund** (MSO-58), an unofficial liaison link between the NSA and the TNA, also developed some information. All leads pointed to Philadelphia or Baltimore environs. With Mark in Oregon and Carl in Idaho, the NSA was looking for someone on the East Coast to investigate the evidence and I took up the challenge. In 2008 I received an email from **Chris Sorenson** (Associate) with the address of a likely cemetery in Baltimore that he had obtained from an internet search. Mark, Carl, and Chris are thus the first three key people. Anyone can Google "Triple Nickles" or "555th Parachute Infantry" and find ample websites with the history of the TN and the 555th, including the death of Malvin Brown, but will find no informa-

tion on where he is buried, at least not that any smokejumper has ever seen.

I recognized the address as a most unlikely location in downtown Baltimore, no fault of Chris, since I once delivered courier packages there in a part-time retirement job. But **John Maclean** (Associate) and I went there anyways just to say we'd run out every lead. It was clearly downtown. What would Sherlock do next? We went to a shopping center in a black Baltimore neighborhood on a rainy winter Sunday morning and started asking people if they knew of a black Mount Calvary Cemetery. Miracle One - someone directed us out into Anne Arundel County. Not finding anything we stopped at a sheriff sub-station. Miracle Two - a black lady sheriff's deputy told us where it was, not far away. We spent hours there and turned that place inside out and upside down finding no Malvin Brown, although there were other WW II veterans there in a cemetery with a lot of weeds and brush obscuring faded markers. Later, I called a phone number seen on a maintenance shed and talked to a lovely black lady, who turned out to be one of the owners of the private cemetery, and she could find no "Malvin Brown." I was clear that I was looking for a Malvin Brown, not a Marvin Brown. Thus ended the hunt for five years.

In October 2013, Joe Murchison, TNA president in Tampa, FL, sent Carl a copy of a War Department document "Application For Headstone or Marker" for Malvin L. Brown. Carl sent it to Mark and *Smokejumper* editor Chuck Sheley. Chuck emailed me this message: "Fred, is this something you can do?" I said I would give it the old college try one more time when spring arrives and that's it. Joe Murchison just became the fourth key person in this saga as he had just reopened the search.

Miracle Three - I Googled "Malvin L. Brown."

CHECK TYPE REQUIRED (See instructions attached)		APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER (PLEASE MAKE OUT AND RETURN IN DUPLICATE)				ORIGINAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UPRIGHT MARBLE HEADSTONE		Enlistment dates	9 Nov 1942		Ald 16 Nov 42	
<input type="checkbox"/> UPRIGHT GRANITE HEADSTONE		Discharge dates	Died in service Aug 6, 1945			
<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MARKER		Pension number				
<input type="checkbox"/> FLAT GRANITE MARKER		Serial number	33,467,126			
Name <i>Malvin L. Brown</i>		Rank <i>Pfc</i>	Company <i>Med Sq. Parachute Inf Bn</i>	U. S. Regiment, State Organization, or Vessel <i>55th</i>	Date of Death <i>Aug 6, 1945</i>	
Name of Cemetery <i>Mount Calvary Cemetery Baltimore Md.</i>		Located in or near—		If World War Veteran		EMBLEM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		City <i>Baltimore Md.</i>	State <i>Md.</i>	Division <i>Unknown</i>	State	Christian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
						Hebrew <input type="checkbox"/>
						None <input type="checkbox"/>
To be shipped to <i>Mrs Beulah Ferguson</i>		at <i>Maryland & Pennsylvania R.R. Baltimore Md.</i>		(Give R. NAME OR TOWN, county, and state)		
Whose post-office address is <i>1245 O. Eager St. Baltimore, (2) Md.</i>		(Name of consignee)				
DO NOT WRITE HERE		This application is for a headstone or marker for the UNMARKED grave of a veteran. The Government STONE will be furnished and shipped freight prepaid at Government expense to you direct, where "Delivery Service" by the railroad is in effect; otherwise to the nearest railroad station or steamboat landing above indicated. I hereby agree to accept promptly the headstone or marker at destination, remove it, and properly place it at decedent's grave at my expense.				
For verification		PROCTOR, VT. JUL 15 1946				
Ordered		6311714				
B/L						
Shipped						
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY G. Form No. 683		Approved Aug. 12, 1913; May 18, 1931; Feb. 15, 1937; May 1, 1939; July 1, 1940; July 1, 1942.		Address <i>Court House, York Pa.</i> Date <i>April 25, 1946</i>		
RS-6P Rev. Admin. Ch. AEO St. Louis, Mo.		IMPORTANT—COMPLETE REVERSE SIDE			16-11453-1 GPO	

I found an article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of August 16, 2010, by Tony Wood. The article started out about scientific research on the jet stream and moved into Japanese balloon bombs launched in an effort to burn off the western states in the 1945 dry season. It also touched on the Bly, Oregon, event of May 5, 1945, when a balloon bomb exploded and killed a pastor's wife and five children, not their own, on a picnic (see my article on the Bly event in the July 2013 *Smokeyjumper*). It went on to the Triple Nickles and the death of Malvin L. Brown. Had I not googled the middle initial you would not be reading this because I would not have found Tony Wood.

I contacted Tony in April 2014 because he was from Philadelphia, as was much of the Brown information. I sent him all the info Mark, Carl, Chris, Joe, and I had gathered. He was most grateful because he always wanted to follow up on Brown but didn't know anybody with more information. We had census information and high school information on Brown that placed his young years on the "Main Line," the affluent socialite area coming west out of Philadelphia with gentry homes, large estates and horse farms. Also on the "Main Line" are black communities where the people lived who worked in those homes and tended those grounds.

There was some evidence Brown had been buried

in Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. The body had been shipped to a certain funeral home in that area. I suggested to Tony, whom I hadn't met yet, that he check out that home, and he found its successor had no old records. Tony also ran into dead ends on some possible names of relatives and some addresses derived from old records Mark had uncovered. But there was also evidence for Baltimore. The headstone was to be sent to a Baltimore address intended for Mount Calvary Cemetery. I had Google-mapped that address and it was clearly redeveloped. He had been buried in August 1945, but the headstone was not applied for until April 1946 in a Pennsylvania courthouse and was not ordered from Vermont until July 1946. I saw many possible glitches.

However, I had an increasing feeling we were in the 20-yard red zone. Then Tony Googled the Mount Calvary Cemetery and found a phone number on the internet. I had called this number repeatedly and never gotten an answer last winter. Now Tony got an answering machine. Shortly, he was called back by one of the family owners, brother of the lady I talked to five years ago. Miracle Four - this brother had come from the Virgin Islands for one month to help clean up the cemetery and had put an answering machine on the usually unattended cemetery phone line. I had talked to his sister on her home line.

Tony asked if they had a Malvin Brown. Jim said they had a “Marvin Brown” in the records, an obvious typo as it turned out, and added as an apparent afterthought - he died on August 6, 1945 in Oregon! (I had never mentioned the date or place when talking to his sister five years ago. I was simply asking for Malvin Brown.)

At this point Tony sent me an email and said, “I think we have it. Get back to me.” I was looking at my screen and said, “I’m right here. What’s up?” Tony told me what he just learned and said the guy is outside taking pictures and will get back to us. Jim took pictures of a gravestone that said “Malvin L. Brown, Maryland, Pvt. 1 Cl., 555th Parachute Infantry Bn., October 11, 1920, August 6, 1945” and e-mailed

them to Tony. A few minutes later, Tony was looking at the photo on his computer in Philadelphia and I was looking at the same photo on my computer in Virginia. I said to Tony, “Are we beyond a reasonable doubt? Can we go public?” Tony said, “Let’er go!” But for the presence of the letter “L” in the name and in the middle initial, this case could have continued in obscurity. Was this God’s plan, was this coincidence? Depending on your theological framework, take your pick.

On Memorial Day Weekend 2014, Tony Wood, Bob Matthews of the Baltimore Triple Nickles, Denis Symes (MYC-63), and I placed an American flag on the gravesite of Pfc. Malvin L. Brown. May he RIP, God bless his soul. 🇺🇸



Fred Donner of the National Smokejumper Association, Tony Wood of The Philadelphia Inquirer, and Bob Matthews of the Baltimore Triple Nickles, placed an American flag on the gravesite of PFC Malvin L. Brown on Memorial Day Weekend 2014. (Photos courtesy Denis Symes)



ODDS AND ENDS



by **Chuck Sheley**

Congratulations and thanks to **Gordon Brazzi** (RDD-66) and **Steve Dickenson** (LGD-78) who just became our latest **Life Member(s)**.

Jack Dunne (MSO-46) on the recent passing of **David "Doc" Kauffman** (MSO-45): "I think that Doc was the best loved person in Whitefish. He took care of the poor folks and, here at home one day, told me he had many thousands of dollars on the books that would never be paid. He was good and popular in the valley. We were lucky to have known him."

Nick Holmes (RDD-79): "My wife and I have moved back to Redding after my retirement as a Facilities Manager. It is good to be home again with the old jumper bros to tell tales with. We bought a home just south of the airport. I enjoy sitting out on my deck and watching jump planes and air tankers fly over."

Jack Seagraves (MYC-63): "I retired to a small farm in western Canyon Co., Idaho. Moved to Ecuador two years ago."

Neil Rylander (MSO-61): "Chuck, very good (July 2014) issue! **Barry Reed** (MSO-60) and I sent off to Air America for job application forms. Barry did it and went. I decided not to mail back. Have to wonder what my life might have been like if I had and been accepted. This issue told me more than I understood about when guys were going to SE Asia and what they experienced. Good Men!"

Fred Donner (MSO-59): "Based on extensive research by **Mark Corbet** (LGD-74) and **Carl Gidlund** (MSO-58) that was furnished to me, a Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper reporter and I found the gravesite on May 15, 2015, of Pfc. Malvin L. Brown. This Triple Nickle died on August 6, 1945, when he fell from a tree on an Oregon fire. He was the only Triple Nickle to die and is considered the first smokejumper to die on duty. The grave location has been unknown for 69 years. More details will be forthcoming."

Chris Schow (MYC-88) is a Fire Management Officer on the Stanislaus N.F. and now living in Sonora, Calif.

Les Joslin (Editor, *OldSmokeys Newsletter*): "Your SEA issue is interesting and informative. The real surprise was **Karl Brauneis**' (MSO-77) article, 'Smokejumper-



ing Legends' **Floyd** (RDD-65) and **Lloyd** (RDD-66) **Whitaker**, that sent me straight to my Monterey Union High School Class of '61 yearbook. Though the article didn't mention those guys' origins, they absolutely gotta be the same Floyd and Lloyd Whitaker who graduated from MUHS the same year I did and played on the MUHS football team. Right there on page 90 are Floyd (75) and Lloyd (72) whom I remember as the two biggest guys on the team. They were ranch kids from the Big Sur country and match the description in the article right down to the ubiquitous Levis and white tee-shirts."

Tom Kovalicky (MSO-61): "I wish we could get your article about women testing standards for Smokejumper eligibility in front of the right people. A very good piece. Why not mail a copy to somebody in the USFS WO and see what reaction you get? Could also submit it as a White Paper to the next interagency training summit. I am certain they have something like that these days. Thanks for your hard work keeping the printed media going, I appreciate your long hours."

Jim Hagemeier (MSO-57): "Enjoyed reading about the 'kickers.' Many were, or still are, my friends. As a side note, I had a brush with the CIA in Colorado back in 1960. Worked on the White River N.F., where Camp Hale was located. They had a fire at the camp and called the FS to provide overhead for some regular army troops that were brought in to fight the fire. I was one of the overhead and as we drove in, I saw all these 'little people' with dark skins running around and also noted the training gear looked a lot like the training stations for jumping in Missoula. I asked an Officer what was going on. The next thing I knew, a couple guerrillas, dressed all in black, came roaring up the road and hauled me down to a barracks. After about two hours and a lot of explaining, they let me go with 'you don't know anything, and don't say anything.' My last act at Camp Hale was to design a recreation plan after the site was closed and turned over to the Forest Service."

Eric Hagen (MYC-83): "Just received the July edition of *Smokejumper* magazine and feel the need to com-

ment on Jim Cherry's 'Message from the President.' The round vs. square debate has been with us for a long time, but never before have I heard the issue and a methodical criteria for resolving it (i.e., the questions needing answers) laid out so clearly, rationally and unemotionally. I heartily concur. Well said, Jim!"

George Harpole (MSO-49): "Chuck, spectacular July issue, especially your travel report of going to Long Cheng, Laos. Like others of my vintage, I was recruited by the CIA. Came off too spooky and had other good domestic employment options. But, I did follow a lot of detail via smokejumper buddies **Max Allen** (MSO-48) and **Wally Dobbins** (MSO-47). Incredible history."

Agency Rep in Laos during Secret War: "The *Smoke-*

jumper magazine arrived yesterday. It's an historical treasure. I particularly enjoyed Shep's piece and, by the way, I met his medivac flight and my fading memory tells me that it was a B-40 rocket round that wounded him. Also on Shep - he talks about the teltap op we ran out of PS-44. One day shortly before the final launch, I decided to give the team a night off and we all flew to Udorn for a good meal, leaving Shep to mind the store. That night a PS-44 outpost received an NVA probe, and it was the only time we had any direct contact during the entire operational period. I don't believe I ever convinced Shep that I didn't know it was coming."

Brett Bittenbender (MYC-88) retired June 30, 2014, after 33 years with the USFS, 26 years as a smokejumper. 🙏

The Longest Rescue?

by **Carl Gidlund** (Missoula '58)

Firefighting can be – and usually is – tough. However, anyone who has packed an injured person out of the woods would probably attest that, compared to that kind of ordeal, battling a fire is a piece of cake.

I haven't had that experience, thank God, but **Jack Demmons** (MSO-50), a determined researcher, has dug out of Missoula newspaper archives the story of what is perhaps the longest and most arduous packout in smokejumper history. Part of the story was related in these pages in July 2004 by **Gregg Phifer** (MSO-44) in an article entitled "Rescue Jump at Cooper Creek."

Here's the rest of the story as pieced together from Missoula's jumper log, another jumper's reminiscences and those newspapers:

Archie Keith (MSO-45) was one of eight men dropped on the Bitterroot National Forest's Cooper Creek Fire July 31, 1945. The three-acre, ridge-top blaze was ringed by tall timber, a rockslide, giant boulders and snags. That was their jump spot.

Ralph Spicer (MSO-44) hooked a boot heel in the crotch of a tree, but eventually made a successful letdown. Keith wasn't as lucky. His chute caught on the top of what newspapers described as an 80-foot snag that fell on him, fracturing his thigh in two places and crushing an ankle. They were 16 miles from the nearest road.

Crewmembers deployed steamers signaling the

circling Ford Trimotor that they had a serious injury. The pilot radioed the information to the Missoula base and, within an hour, a second Ford was dropping more smokejumpers to the Cooper Creek Fire. Foreman **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) and Phifer were among them.

This was an almost unprecedented situation. Since the smokejumper program began in 1940, there hadn't been any firefighter injuries that called for Missoula jumpers to carry a man from the woods.

That record was shattered in 1945. During that fire season, there were six serious jumper injuries out of the Missoula base alone. In addition, that was the year of the first smokejumper fatality. **Malvin Brown** (PNOR-45), a member of the black 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, fell to his death while making a letdown following a fire jump on Oregon's Umpqua National Forest.

Back at the Cooper Creek Fire, members of the original load had fashioned a makeshift stretcher using poles and their jump jackets and begun carrying Keith. The second Ford had dropped a standard stretcher, so two men from the carrying party hiked a half-mile back to the drop zone to fetch it.

Here's what one of the jumpers, **James Brunk** (MSO-45), remembers about their ordeal: "We were 16 miles from the nearest road and in a valley which was full of dead falls and tall snags. The brush was head-high and it was getting dark.

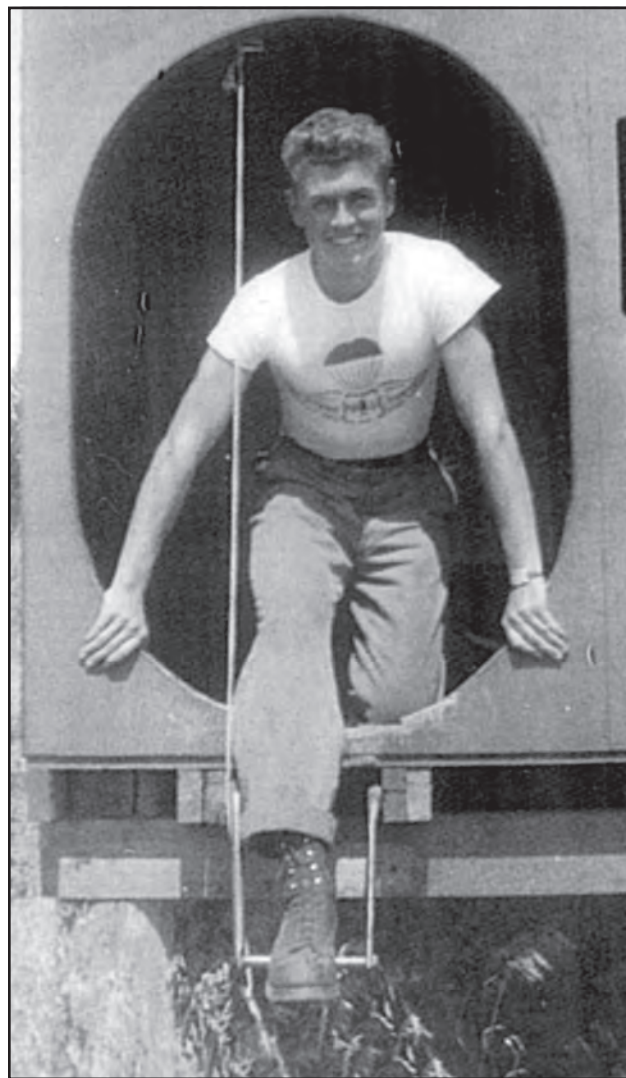


Gregg Phifer (MSO-44) (NSA file)

“Al (**Alfred Thiessen** (MSO-44) and I would go ahead with pulaskis and cut a way through the brush and dead falls for possibly a hundred yards, and then we would come back to the others and help them carry Archie. At the end of our cut, we would stop and let them rest, and Al and I would go ahead and cut another hundred yards or so of trail.

“This process went on all night and by 7 a.m., approximately 12 hours after we started, we were two miles below where we began and getting into more open woods. We found a trail, which had not been maintained, with many dead falls across it, so the going was very tough. About 10 a.m. we met a pair of Forest Service men who were coming in to meet us, cutting the dead falls out of the trail with cross cut saws, and from there it began to be easier.

“By noon we had him down about seven miles from where we started and another crew of men, 10 strong,



Jim Brunk (MSO-45). Part of the jump crew. Later went on to become a medical doctor. (NSA file)

were jumped into that small clearing by a small station. They carried him the rest of the way, and the six of us who had carried him through the night were only expected to keep up as they went the remaining nine miles to the end of the road.”

The Missoula jumper log is accurate in terms of the men deployed, but is confusing in recounting which men remained on the fire and which ones carried Keith. It’s certain that Phifer stayed to fight the blaze as did Spicer and probably **Gerhard Smeiska** (MSO-45), **Robert Marshall** (MSO-45) and **Edwin Vail** (MSO-44). They were a mixture of men from the first and second loads.

According to Phifer’s account, Foreman Waite also remained on the fire, but other accounts have him leading the stretcher team out of the woods. Further confusing the situation is the other load of jumpers that was dropped at Cooper’s Flat, nine miles from

the fire.

The stretcher bearers from the fire and from Cooper's Flat included Brunk and Thiessen, and perhaps **Wayne Kurtz** (MSO-45), **Dick Lehman** (MSO-45), **Virgil Miller** (MSO-45), **Neilford Eller** (MSO-45), **Carey Evans** (MSO-45), **John Johnson** (MSO-44), **James Mattocks** (MSO-45) and **Luke Birky** (MSO-45). It's also probable that the Cooper's Flat jumpers carried two hypodermic needles containing a pain-relieving drug prepared by a Missoula physician.

Apparently, the Missoula base asked for medical help from the Triple Nickle smokejumpers stationed at Pendleton, Ore. Two members of the 555th Parachute Battalion, medical doctor First Lt. **Charles Burks** (PNOR-45) and medic Cpl. **Benjamin Brown** (PNOR-45), volunteered their assistance and were dispatched to Missoula. With smokejumper **James Hain** (MSO-44), they also jumped somewhere between Cooper's Flat and the Paradise Guard Station where they gave Keith penicillin and sulfa, and applied an Army splint.

The 16-mile trek from the fire to the Paradise Station, the end of the road where Keith was put in an ambulance, had taken from 7 p.m. July 31 until 7:30

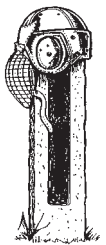
the following evening. The ambulance ride from Paradise to St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula took another five hours.

A sad footnote to this story is that when the two black volunteers – with Burks nursing a sprained ankle – finally arrived in Missoula, no hotel would provide them lodging because of their race. That prompted one Missoula resident, lady minister Barrying Morrison, to write an indignant letter to the editor of the Missoula newspaper.

Referring to the servicemen, she wrote that they were “willing to fight for freedom and democracy,” but they “found that in an average American town [they were] denied the very thing for which [they are] fighting. ... Not all ‘average American towns’ are like ours. Some of them don't simply talk about freedom and democracy but actually try to practice it.”

You'll note the question mark following the title of this article. Keith's rescue was apparently the longest packout of an injured Missoula jumper. If you know of a longer one, how about writing about it? 📧

Archie Keith died Feb. 1993 in Ottawa, IL of natural causes. (Ed.)



Off The List

Remember and honor fellow jumpers with a gift to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund in their name. Hard times can fall on many of us at any time. The NSA is here to support our fellow jumpers and their families through the Good Samaritan Fund. Mail your contribution to:

Chuck Sheley
10 Judy Lane
Chico, CA 95926

Herman E. Ball (Missoula '50)

Herm died April 16, 2014, in Lafayette, Colorado. He graduated from Robertsville High School (Alabama) and spent two years in the merchant marines before attending Auburn University. Herm jumped at Missoula for the 1950-51 seasons before working for the CIA on various projects, including the Taiwan Project documented in an October 2005 piece in Smokejumper magazine. Herm started a career in 1956 with the USFS and retired in Colorado. During retirement he started a business putting together forestry management plans for landowners.

David V. Kauffman (Missoula '45)

David “Doc” Kauffman, 92, died April 14, 2014, in Whitefish, Montana. He worked on the family

farm, a sawmill, and was a packer for the USFS until WWII when he served in the Civilian Public Service Program. Doc jumped with the CPS-103 unit at Missoula during the 1945 season.

After the war he attended Eastern Mennonite University and graduated from medical school at Hahnemann University. Doc moved to Whitefish where he practiced family medicine for over 40 years.

Among his passions were horses and hunting in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Robert G. Putzker (Missoula '74)

Bob died April 19, 2014, of natural causes. He graduated from Montana State University with degrees in agricultural production and got his masters in forestry from Washington State University in 1982.

In 1995 he earned a physical therapy degree from the University of Montana. He was a man of many talents: smokejumper, sawyer, range scientist, physical therapist and rancher. Bob jumped at Missoula 74, 79, 92-94 and West Yellowstone 75-78 and 1981.

Robert W. “Bob” Pell (North Cascades ’56)

Bob died April 22, 2014, in Conconully, WA. He attended Wenatchee Valley College where he played on the National Junior College Championship football team. Bob then graduated from Western Washington with his degree in Education and taught and coached at Pioneer Jr. H.S. and Wenatchee High School for 30 years. In addition to his teaching career, Bob worked for 40 years for the USFS managing the Wenatchee and Moses Lake Tanker Bases. He jumped at North Cascades during the 1956 season.

Robert M. “Bob” Gossett (McCall ’46)

Bob, 91, died April 21, 2014. The son of former Idaho Governor Charlie Gossett, he graduated from Boise Jr. College and the University of Idaho in Business.

Bob was a Navy pilot during WWII and jumped at McCall during the 1946 season. He continued to own and fly multiple aircraft throughout his life.

Bob combined the power of the computer and business accounting and founded Cougar Mountain Software (CMS). CMS was incorporated, became a national competitor, and remains a second-generation employer in Boise.

Richard E. “Dick” Frazer (Missoula ’45)

Dick, 90, of Stevensville, MT, died February 23, 2014. He enlisted in the Marines at age 17 during WWII and was on a troop transport that was torpedoed at sea. He returned to Stevensville where he spent most of his life and was the oldest member of American Legion Post 94. Dick jumped at Missoula during the 1945-46 seasons.

Arthur C. Penner (Cave Junction ’44)

Arthur died February 16, 2013, in Weatherford, Oklahoma. He was a member of the CPS-103 smokejumpers during WWII and jumped at Cave Junction and at North Cascades in 1945. He was a bricklayer after the war and a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Alvan L. Privette (North Cascades ’49)

Alvan, 83, passed away peacefully April 18, 2011, at St. Mary’s Hospital in Reno, Nevada. A WWII Veteran, he was a jump instructor with the All

American 82nd Airborne. Al was one of the founding coaches of the Reno Continental Little League and was a proud member of the Cal-Nevada All Airborne Association.

Robert W. Sallee (Missoula ’49)

Bob died in Sacred Heart Hospital, Spokane, on May 26 owing to complications from open-heart surgery. He was born Aug. 18, 1931, in a farmhouse near Willow Creek, Mont.

He was the last living survivor of the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire in the Gates of the Mountains, Mont. His escape from that tragedy that killed 12 of his fellow smokejumpers and a fireguard was described in Norman Maclean’s 1992 best selling book “Young Men and Fire.”

Bob graduated from high school in Sandpoint, Idaho, and attended the University of Idaho before graduating from Eastern Washington University with an accounting degree in 1973. Over the course of his career he farmed, ran a hardware store and farm implement company in Fairfield, Wash., helped build a paper mill in Missoula, Mont. where he learned that industry, then went on to set up paper mills in New Zealand, India, South Africa and Algeria before settling down in Spokane to work at the Inland Empire Paper Co., for which he was employed for 24 years, eventually becoming the company’s production manager before his retirement in 2000.

An avid outdoorsman, Bob was a skilled hunter and fisherman. In addition, for the past six years he participated with other retired smokejumpers restoring historic buildings and maintaining trails in the forests of Idaho and Montana.

Luke T. Krebs (McCall ’88)

Luke, 49, died May 30, 2014. He was raised in Pullman, Washington, where he graduated from high school, earned his bachelor’s degree in Education and then his a Ph.D. in Pharmacology Toxicology from Washington State University. Every summer from 1986 to 1992, Luke worked as a smokejumper in McCall, Idaho, a job he truly loved. After receiving his doctorate in 1998, he took a research position at The Jackson Laboratory where he worked until 2011. Luke then moved on to Maine Medical Center Research Institute where he worked until he was diagnosed with stage IV adrenal cortex cancer.

Jean M. Dammann (Cook NCSB)

Jean died May 25, 2014, in Spokane, Washington. She attended the Peterson School of Business and Washington State College while working at Boeing

Aircraft and the Veterans Administration. Jean and Frankie Waller prepared all the meals at NCSB for 23 years. **John Pino** (NCSB-70) says he learned more about smokejumping from Jean and Frankie than any squadleader at Winthrop.

Al Hebrank (North Cascades '52)

Al, 72, died June 3, 2006. He served as President of the Land Surveyor's Association and was on the State Board of Registration for ten years in the state of Washington. He was a leader in the Surveyor's profession in that state. Al jumped at NCSB during the 1952 season.

James H. "Jimmy" Theubet (North Cascades '58)

Jimmy died June 21, 2014, at his home in Chelan, WA. He started working for the USFS in 1957, jumped at Winthrop in 1958-59, and joined the Army in 1961 where he served three years. Jimmy joined the Army again in 1968, went to Officer Candidate School, became an Airborne Ranger and served in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division as a Scout Dog Unit Commander. After his return from Vietnam, he resumed his Forest Service Career retiring in 1989 after 32 years of government service.

James "Smokey" Alexander (Missoula '40)

The last member of the original 1940 smokejumper crew, Jim Alexander died June 23, 2014. Smokey was one of the eleven original smokejumpers trained in 1940. He was a graduate of the University of Montana and the forest service employee who represented the Cabinet N.F. in the first smokejumper training group.

On July 20, 1940, he and **Dick Lynch** (MS0-40) jumped the second fire in smokejumper history at the head of Moose Creek in Idaho. They found the fire by coordinating azimuth readings from two lookouts and put it out shortly after smoke started appearing above the trees. The fire was so isolated that it took them 19 hours to walk about 40 miles to the nearest ranger station.

Smokey began Intermountain Business Forms in 1960 while living in Boise. After moving to North Carolina in 1989, he and his wife, Dorothy, returned to Boise in 2005.

Dwight G. Chambers (Missoula '66)

Dwight died May 30, 2014, at the VA Medical Center in Seattle. He was badly injured in a skiing accident 14 months ago. Dwight graduated from Northern Arizona University in 1967 and later

earned his master's degree from Michigan State University. He jumped at Missoula during the 1966-67 seasons.

In 1968 Dwight was accepted to Officer Candidate School at Quantico and served three years in the Marine Corps where he flew the T-38 Talon and A-4 Skyhawk.

After the Marine Corps, he began a 40-year career with the USFS where his favorite position was that of ranger on the Superior R.D. from 1984-89.

Dwight spent his life volunteering as a T-ball coach, Cub Scout Leader, and in the National Ski Patrol where he received a 30-year recognition award in 2013.

Richard S. Zehr (Missoula '43)

Dick, 91, died April 19, 2013, in Flanagan, Illinois. He was one of the original CPS-103 smokejumpers and one of the few that jumped all three years of the program from 1943-45. He was a member of the Mennonite Church and worked in Flanagan after his time as a smokejumper.

John Robert "Bob" Newbrough (McCall '53)

Bob, PhD, Professor Emeritus at Vanderbilt University, died January 1, 2013. He earned his BA from the College of Idaho and his PhD from the University of Utah. Bob jumped at McCall during the 1953 and 1955 seasons.

After a fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, he joined the faculty in Psychology at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. Bob was one of the founders of the new field of Community Psychology and edited the Journal of Community Psychology for many years. He was a board member of the Rosalyn Carter Institute for Caregiving and a valued advisor to Mrs. Carter. Although he retired in 2002, Bob remained active advising doctoral students.

Timothy J. Smith (Missoula '76)

Tim died August 31, 1994, at his family ranch near Thompson Falls, Montana. He completed six years of study at the Univ. of Montana while working for the USFS. Tim was a member of the Flathead Hotshot Crew and jumped at Missoula 1976-79 and 1981. He later worked for the Montana Power Company and on his family ranch. Thanks to **Neil Anderson** (MSO-75) for passing along this information. 🙏

NSA Good Samaritan Fund Contributions

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BLAST FROM THE PAST

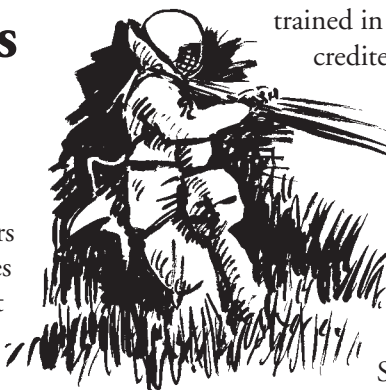
Work Of Jumpers In Region Told

by Jack Demmons (Missoula '50)

The Daily Missoulian, February 8, 1944

THE WORK OF parachute forest firefighters and doctors trained in jumping techniques developed by the USFS in the Northwest is featured in an article, "Trouble Chuters," appearing in *Collier's* magazine. The illustrations are from photographs by smokejumpers **Edgar Nafziger** (MSO-43) and **Phil Stanley** (MSO-43).

Figures in the article show that 53 backwoods fires were confined to small areas and negligible damage during the 1944 fire season by 153 parachute firefighters. Late returns from the USFS raise these figures to 78 fires controlled by 240 smokejumpers. Six doctors



trained in USFS methods of jumping into timber are credited with saving 79 lives in less than a year.

The article gives a comprehensive account of this latest method of combating fires in remote forest areas. The development of the work of air rescue squads for getting medical help is also described. Mention is made of the pioneer efforts of Major Frank Wiley, formerly a pilot with the Johnson Flying Service and now with the Div. of Flying Safety of the Army Air Force.

Interesting experiences by **Earl Cooley** (MSO-40), who with **Rufus Robinson** (MSO-40) made the first fire jump, and such veterans as **Art Cochran** (MSO-42) and **Jim Waite** (MSO-40) lend color to the article. Credit is given to **Frank Derry** (MSO-40) and the skillful flying of the Johnson brothers for the success of the project. 🦅



L-R: Gayle Morrison (Author "Hog's Exit"), Patrick Lee (MYC-56) (Author "Kickers"), Cliff Hamilton (CJ-62), Lee (RDD-57) and Mary Gossett at a recent Air America reunion. (Courtesy Lee Gossett)

Mann Gulch Survivor Corrects Errors

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

Reprint from October 2005 Smokejumper magazine.

Fire and Ashes, a book by John Maclean, contains several errors, and **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49) wants those that relate to the Mann Gulch Fire corrected.

The error that concerns him most is about his fellow '49 rookie and Mann Gulch survivor **Walter Rumsey** (MSO-49). It's in a section of the book called "The Last Survivor." That was written about Sallee as the last of the three smokejumpers who survived the 1949 fire on Montana's Helena National Forest that killed 12 jumpers and a wilderness guard.

In that story, Maclean writes that Rumsey couldn't bring himself to jump after the Mann Gulch disaster.

"That's just not true," Sallee says. "Walt and I jumped two other fires together after Mann Gulch, and he jumped two more after that."

Records maintained by Missoula's Aerial Fire Depot corroborate Sallee's memory: He recalls that 10 days after their August 5 jump into Mann Gulch, Sallee and Rumsey were dropped on a two-man fire into Pattee Canyon on the Lolo National Forest, just east of Missoula.

Then, on August 19, Sallee and Rumsey were paired again, this time on a 16-man fire near Plains, Montana.

The fire depot's jump records indicate Rumsey jumped two more fires, on August 27 and September 2, 1949. Fire records for that year are incomplete, however, and there's no indication of where those fires were.

As indicated by the title of Maclean's piece, Sallee, at 72, is the last living witness to what occurred in Mann Gulch. Foreman **Wagner "Wag" Dodge** (MSO-41), who ignited a rescue fire the other jumpers disdained to use, died of Hodgkin's Disease in 1955. Walter Rumsey perished in 1980 in a commuter plane crash near Omaha.

Sallee feels an obligation to set the record straight for his fellow jumpers, for students of the fire, and for future historians who may read this article.

Maclean's account states that 15 jumpers were dispatched to Mann Gulch. Actually 16 jumpers were on the load, but turbulent air caused one jumper to become so sick he was unable to jump. He remained with the aircraft and returned to the jumpers' Missoula

base.

The other errors in John Maclean's Mann Gulch piece concern the sequence of events after the fire blew up and the identification of the Forest Service's principal investigator.

According to Maclean's account, Sallee followed Rumsey through rimrock on the north escarpment of Mann Gulch after Sallee stopped to look into the gulch.

Sallee says that's incorrect. He was the first one through the rimrock and he looked back, he says, only after he'd made it through, with Rumsey on his heels.

Maclean writes that, after the main fire passed through the gulch, Dodge left his rescue fire, climbed to the ridge top and met Sallee and Rumsey. Then, according to Maclean, the three found squadleader **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46) and jumper **Joe Sylvia** (MSO-48).

That's not how it happened, according to Sallee. Here's his account:

"By the time Dodge made it to the top of the ridge, Walt and I had found Hellman. His clothes had been burned off his back. We helped him over to a rock and sat him down.

"I tried to return to the jump spot to get the first aid kit, but it was still too hot in the gulch. I couldn't make it."

It was then, Sallee says, that Dodge joined them. He told the three jumpers he'd found Sylvia alive and not badly burned. He'd removed Sylvia's boots, and then climbed to the ridge top.

"Dodge then decided that Walt would stay with Hellman while he and I went down to the river for help," Sallee recalls. "We hiked down the next gulch north, the one that became known as Rescue Gulch."

The two jumped over three-foot flames from the fire that had slopped over into that gulch, but reached the river easily. They flagged down a boatload of tourists watching the fire who took the jumpers to Meriwether Landing at the mouth of the gulch, just south of Mann Gulch. There, they met Ranger Robert Jansson who radioed for a rescue crew.

Sallee found a sleeping bag and slept until 10 p.m. when that crew arrived. It consisted of an alternate ranger, two doctors and several others.

After the short boat trip back to the mouth of Rescue Gulch, Sallee led the party, including Ranger

Jansson, back up the gulch to Hellman and Rumsey, then over the ridge top to Sylvia. Hellman and Sylvia were evacuated to a Helena hospital the next morning, but died later that day.

The final error spotted by Sallee in Maclean's account is the identification of the Forest Service's chief Mann Gulch investigator, A.J. "Bert" Cramer. Maclean writes that Cramer was a smokejumper foreman. In fact, Cramer was not a jumper, but retired as a ranger. His son Albert, now deceased, jumped from 1943 to

The two jumped over three-foot flames from the fire, which had slopped over into the gulch, and reached the river easily. They flagged down some tourists watching the fire who took the jumpers to Meriwether Landing at the mouth of the gulch, just south of Mann Gulch. There, they met Ranger Robert Jansson who radioed for a rescue crew.

1969 from Missoula, McCall and Fairbanks, retiring as the superintendent of the latter base.

Walter Rumsey's 51-year-old son, Steve, lives in Colville, Washington, where he and his wife run a bookstore and publish a magazine. Colville is two hours north of Sallee's home in Spokane and about three hours from my North Idaho residence.

At Sallee's request, the three of us met in a Colville restaurant on a beautiful November day in 2004. **Jim Manion** (Missoula '54), who also lives in Colville, spotted us and joined our group.

Steve Rumsey recounted memories of his father, while Sallee contributed additional memories and observations of events following Mann Gulch.

Walter Rumsey, born in 1927 in Larned, Kansas, dropped out of high school to join the navy just as World War II was ending. After his discharge, he returned to school and, in 1949, was a student at Utah State University.

"Dad told us he'd wanted to return to smokejumping in 1950," Steve says, "but the next summer he had to go to a range management summer camp, so he couldn't."

Walter Rumsey graduated with a degree in range

management in 1951, and then farmed for 18 months before joining the Soil Conservation Service. He remained with that agency for the rest of his life, serving in Utah, Idaho, Colorado and New Mexico, and finally Nebraska. In addition to Steve, he fathered another boy and a girl.

"Dad went out of his way to avoid talking about Mann Gulch," Steve says. "I believe he told mom the facts, but he kept his emotions to himself."

Steve Rumsey said his father had periodic nightmares that, he believes, were related to the killer fire: "In some, he was trapped in situations where he thought he was going to die, but he couldn't do anything about it. In at least one of the dreams, he scientifically analyzed the dramatic event." "Obviously," he said, "Mann Gulch affected his father, but he moved forward with his career and his family and, to the best of my knowledge, it didn't unduly affect his life, although he did mention survivor's guilt a couple of times."

But it did affect Sallee's.

"Since then, I've been an emotional exile," the last survivor says.

"I think it's because of Mann Gulch that I don't feel sorrow or elation like other people seem to. When my grandparents, parents and my first wife died, I couldn't cry. I just took it numbly.

"And, since Mann Gulch, I force myself to stay away from emotional situations," he says.

Recalling the immediate aftermath of the killer fire, Sallee is pretty sure that **Fred Brauer** (Missoula '41), who was then a jumper foreman, was testing him and Rumsey when he offered them a fire jump soon after Mann Gulch.

"I think he wanted to see if we could force ourselves to jump," Sallee says. "In those days, it was almost unknown to pair up two new men for a two-man fire."

But jump they did, and with no hesitation. In fact, Steve says his grandfather – Walter Rumsey's father – had counseled Rumsey that he should jump again.

Sallee says, "After we knocked down the Pattee Canyon Fire, we got to talking a bit about Mann Gulch. The principal thing I remember is that we were both amazed Joe Sylvia had died.

"He was hardly burned at all, but I guess he'd inhaled hot gases."

Sallee says he and Walter Rumsey remained "Christmas card friends" until July 1978 when Norman Maclean, author John's father, brought them together as part of his research for the best-selling *Young Men and Fire*. They returned to Mann Gulch with the author and remained close friends until Rumsey's death two years later. 🕯

WALTER RUMSEY'S STATEMENT TWELVE YEARS AFTER MANN GULCH

Reprint from January 2006 *Smokeyjumper* magazine.

Walter Rumsey's 51-year-old son, Steve, lives in Colville, Washington, where he and his wife run a bookstore and publish a magazine. In February 1961, his Dad wrote the following statement concerning his recollections of the events of that day in 1949. Steve and the family have given permission to print this statement. Walter Rumsey perished in 1980 in a commuter plane crash near Omaha.

The Mann Gulch Fire

On August 5, 1949, 15 Forest Service smokejumpers jumped over Mann Gulch, a small tributary of the Missouri River north of Helena, Montana, to put out a forest fire.

Fighting fire has been one of the important jobs of the Forest Service since its organization in 1905. The smokejumpers were organized before World War II to parachute fire fighters into remote areas before small fires became big ones. Often a small fire got out of control before men going in on foot could get to it. This fire, which was started by lightning, was to become the worst tragedy in the jumpers' history.

We took off from the Missoula airport at 2:00 p.m. in a converted DC-3. There were 15 (*actually 16—one jumper became airsick and didn't jump—Ed.*) of us plus the spotter, the man who chose the jump spot and told us when to leave the plane.

We arrived over the fire about 3:15 p.m. The air was bumpy and rough. The fire was smoking up and we could see the dull red flames chewing away at the green timber. The fire looked small from the air, maybe 10 or 20 acres. We knew that a smoke chaser had been sent to the fire the day before from a nearby ranger station, but we had no way of knowing where he was.

The plane circled the fire two or three times while the spotter and **Wag Dodge** (MSO-41), the foreman, discussed the situation and decided on a jump spot. Most of us were airsick from the long flight over, and we could hardly wait to get out of the plane. The jumper next to me, (**Merle Stratton** MSO-47), was so sick the spotter wouldn't let him jump. Considering what happened later, I'm sure he never regretted it. I was next to the door and jumped in the first group of three with Wag Dodge and **Bill Hellman** (MSO-46). Our target was a large opening in the scattered pine trees that covered the mountain on the north side of Mann Gulch. We knew there was

a stiff breeze blowing before we left the plane because of the way the fire was burning and as we drifted down we turned our parachutes so our backs would be to the wind. In this position we could see where we were going to land and guide the parachute accordingly.

We all three landed hard on the rocky ground. We began picking up our gear as the other jumpers floated down. After the last man had jumped, the spotter began dropping the firefighting equipment, water, and supplies. Our jump area was on the north side of Mann Gulch and across the fire, which was burning near the ridge on the other side of the canyon. We gathered up our supplies and piled it together. Each man was assigned tools, and we left the jump area in single file and headed for the fire.

The fire had spread in the hour it had taken us to get organized, and the wind was blowing briskly towards us carrying the smell of smoke and heat. We reached the bottom of the gulch and, while the rest of us waited, Dodge and two others went up near the fire to locate (**Jim**) **Harrison** (MSO-47), the smoke chaser who had walked into the fire the day before. Harrison had seen us jump and was making his way down to meet us. After meeting Harrison and getting his report, we re-grouped and Dodge led us on a gradual climb back up the north slope of the canyon going west. This gradually brought us out of the canyon and up to where we could see the fire burning on the other side. The fire was burning fiercely and we could hear the roar of the flames.

We were going in a westerly direction down the gulch toward the Missouri River. The plan was to get behind the fire, which seemed to be moving in an easterly direction as the wind gave it momentum. We continued this course for several minutes, but it was rough going with our equipment through the rocks and brush. As we got higher up out of the draw, the brush gave way to a scattered stand of Ponderosa Pine and dry cheat grass.

At this point we could see that the fire was spreading very fast and was becoming dangerous. We continued down the north side of the gulch, hoping to get around behind the fire where it would be safe to go to work. However, it soon became apparent that the fire had jumped across the gulch ahead of us and was now burning on our side of the draw between the Missouri River and us. Dodge immediately told us to drop our tools and gear and to follow him. At this point, some of us were getting a little nervous about the situation.

I pitched the cross-cut saw I was carrying into the brush and made my way up to the head of the line where

I could hear further instructions from Dodge. The wind was increasing and the roar of the fire made it increasingly difficult to hear ordinary conversation. Dodge made a right turn up the mountain toward the ridge and we all followed in single file.

Many of the jumpers were as yet unconcerned and had not discarded their tools as Dodge had instructed. One jumper was taking pictures of the fire with his small camera. Another was carrying a five-gallon tin of water on a backpack. I asked him why he didn't put it down so he could travel faster. He said he figured we would need it later. I didn't argue but made my way up to about three or four men behind Dodge. We were all struggling up the steep slope at a fast walk, but there was no panic.

As we worked our way toward the ridge, I noticed Harrison had stopped and was sitting down resting against a tree. Sweat poured from his face. He was still wearing his heavy smoke-chaser's pack. It was the last time I saw him. Diettert (Eldon) (MSO-49) was just ahead of me in the line, carrying a shovel and pulaski. I told him to give me the shovel to carry, as I had discarded my tools. He handed it to me and I leaned it against a large pine tree and hurried on.

The fire was catching up with us. We were all practically exhausted from our hurried climb up the mountain-side, but now we increased our pace through fear. I think we all knew the danger we were in now. The fire seemed to be behind us and to the left, and we could smell the smoke and feel the heat. Hot ashes began falling around us. The head of the line had nearly reached the partial protection of the rocky ridge top, but some of the men were still several hundred feet behind.

The fire was upon us now, and Dodge realized we all couldn't make the ridge in time. He motioned and yelled for us to gather around him as he explained his escape plan. I was near enough to see his lips moving, but I couldn't hear his voice as he shouted to make us hear above the terrific roar. He knelt and lit a fire in the tinder-dry cheat grass at his foot. He had stopped in a clearing in the trees, and the fire he lit with his cigarette lighter quickly burned out an area several hundred feet long. His plan was for all of us to get into this burned-out area ahead of the main fire and so save ourselves. His shouted orders were lost in the roar of the fire, even to those of us who were close by.

I remember thinking what a good idea Dodge's escape fire was and I also remembered how a fire often stops, or at least slows down, when it reaches a high ridge. I thought if I could only reach the ridge I would be safe, and if I couldn't reach it, I could always duck back to the left into Dodge's burnt-out area and save myself. I looked back now and saw three men silhouetted against a sheet of red flame. I didn't look back a second time.

There were four of us now, Sallee (Bob) (MSO-49) ahead of me, Diettert on my right and Hellman on my left. I couldn't see Dodge anymore because of the smoke. We raced for the rocky ridge only a hundred feet away. Diettert fell away to the right and out of sight. Hellman disappeared in the smoke to the left as Sallee and I scrambled to the top of the ridge and down the other side.

It seemed we were covering 15 feet at every step. I tripped and fell headlong into a currant bush, hardly caring whether I got up or not. Sallee paused and looked back for a second and I got to my feet. On we went, only now we were going down hill on the other side of the ridge. The smoke was so thick we could see only a hundred or so feet ahead. The ridge had slowed the fire but only for a minute.

We ran on not knowing where to go or what to do, when suddenly looming ahead of us in the smoke was a rock slide several hundred feet long and perhaps 75 feet wide. We stumbled into it exhausted and gasping for breath. "If this slide isn't big enough to protect us, it's too bad because we can't go another step," I thought to myself. We lay there for two or three minutes watching the fire come towards us. It was nearly 6:00 p.m., and we could see the red circle of the sun through the smoke.

The fire burned towards us from three sides now, which helped explain the amazing speed with which the fire had trapped us. The fire had not just been behind us as we struggled up the hill. Creating its own draft, like a giant furnace, it had swept around us and come in from both sides!

We saw a form staggering through the smoke ahead of the flames. It was a huge buck deer exhausted and with his lungs seared by the hot gases and smoke. He slumped to the ground a short distance from our sanctuary in the rocks and died.

In the meantime, the fire had reached the slide, and we took off our T-shirts and wrapped them around our faces to keep from breathing the smoke. The rockslide was on an open mountain slope, covered mostly with grass and sagebrush with only a few scattered pine trees. Due to less fuel, the flames were only 8-10 feet high and, although small, the slide was large enough to protect us. We huddled in the rocks close to the ground as possible until we realized the fire had passed us and we were safe. Although we could feel the hot air from the flames, we had no trouble breathing. The smoke began to clear and we discussed what we should do next. I'm sure we were both about half hysterical. We decided we would have to let the ashes cool a little before we tried to get back to where Dodge had lit his escape fire. We were sure that some of the other jumpers had made it to Dodge's burned-out area.

As we talked, the fire swept around us and moved



Smokejumper Historical Photo. June 1940 training group at Seely Lake. Standing L-R: Glenn Smith, Earl Cooley, Merle Lundrigan (Project Leader-trained as jumper in 1941), Jim Alexander, Chet Derry. Kneeling L-R: Rufus Robinson, Jim Waite, Frank Derry, George Case (Dist. Ranger), Dick Lynch, Bill Bolen (did not finish training). Note: Glenn Smith, Virgil Derry and Francis Lufkin from the 1939 experimental group had trained earlier and were at the Winthrop base. Rufus Robinson also trained earlier at Winthrop in 1940.

north, leaving the scattered trees burning like torches all around us. It was dying down south of us, and we began picking our way back through the burning stumps and ashes. Suddenly, we heard a call from below us on the mountain slope. We yelled back and heard again a weak cry for help. We hurried off in the direction of the sound, but it took us several minutes to locate the caller in the smoke.

It was Bill Hellman. He was alive but badly burned. We laid him on a long flat rock to keep his burns out

of the ashes and soot. There wasn't much else we could do. All of our first aid supplies were discarded on our flight up the mountain and we had only a little water. We gave him a drink and made him as comfortable as possible. We couldn't answer his questions as to the fate of the others.

Suddenly another shout and form loomed in the smoke. It was Dodge. He had heard our shouting and had made his way to us. His eyes were red with smoke and he was covered with dirt and ashes. He had laid

flat in his burned-out escape fire and the main fire had passed over him. Very few words passed between us as the impact of the tragedy sunk in. Bob went with Wag to look for other survivors and I stayed with Hellman. They soon returned to tell us that the other men were beyond help.

Since Bill wasn't able to walk, we decided that Dodge and Sallee would go for help while I stayed with him. They left us a pint canteen of water and a can of white potatoes, which, was all the food and water we had between the four of us. They had a tough time finding their way down to the Missouri River in the dark. The trip took them several hours, but our luck changed when they reached the river. A fisherman passing by in his boat heard their shouts and took them to Hilger Landing where they telephoned for help.

In the meantime, Hellman and I waited on the mountain. Bill was having a hard time finding a comfortable position. He couldn't stay in one position longer than a few minutes. He was frantically thirsty, but I knew it would be hours before help arrived, and I tried to ration the water to him. It was almost dark when Wag and Bob left, and Bill and I prepared to wait through the night. Sleep was all but impossible for either of us because of the cold. We talked about our families, trying to pass away the time. He told me about his wife and their new baby boy. His burns didn't seem to bother him much, as long as we could find something to talk about. Our water was gone by midnight. Bill asked me to try to find my way back to the supplies and see if there wasn't water there. I hated to go because I was afraid I would lose him in the dark but he insisted, so I started back up the ridge in the general direction of the jump area. It was slow going through the rocks and burning trees and logs. I made my way to the top, hoping I would be able to see about

where we had landed. It was no use. All I could see were millions of red pinpricks of fire in the black night as the tree stumps burned themselves out. I knew I could never find the supplies in the dark and, if I had, we learned later that the water cans had burst from the heat of the fire.

I found my way back to Hellman by shouting and following his answering yells. By now it was two or three in the morning, and I opened the can of potatoes hoping that Bill could drink the salty water they were packed in. He managed to drink most of it and then slept a little. It was a long night.

At the first crack of dawn, I started for the Missouri River with the canteen to get water for Bill. It was rugged going down the steep slopes and over the rocks. I had gone nearly half a mile and was resting on a rock watching the thousands of still burning stumps. As I watched, some of the burning stumps far below me seemed to be moving! They were moving up the hill and they weren't red, they were white! I nearly fell off the rock in excitement and as I shouted, the lights stopped. The rescue party was soon beside me, and I was drinking from a cool water bag. We continued up the slope and found Hellman. A doctor gave first-aid and they carried him down to the river on a stretcher. He was soon in a Helena hospital, but his burns, plus the long night on the mountain without treatment were too much, and he died the next day.

The Mann Gulch Fire burned on for several days and eventually destroyed 5000 acres of forest and rangeland. The summer of 1949 was a bad one for fires, but untold thousand of acres were saved because the jumpers were able to get to the fire before it got out of control. Occasionally, the circumstances associated with forest fires gang up on man's feeble efforts and get the upper hand. Mann Gulch was one of those fires. 🌲

Bob Sallee: A Personal Remembrance

by Carl Gidlund (Missoula '58)

To most of the world, Bob Sallee (MSO 49) was merely the last living survivor of 1949's Mann Gulch Fire, a disaster that took the lives of 12 smokejumpers and a fireguard on the Helena National Forest. And if God had to spare just a single man to tell the Mann Gulch story, he chose exceedingly well.

Bob was thoughtful, intelligent and articulate and, although he was loathe to tell that story, he did so, probably hundreds of times. He briefed rookie smokejumpers, fire officials, historians and, on a Missouri River float, I heard him recount the tale to a group of canoeists and rafters who somehow learned

that "Mann Gulch Sallee" was camping nearby. They were as enthralled by his telling as any group of fire fighters.

And every year on our volunteer projects, he was beseeched by new crewmembers to recount the story once again. For a shot of scotch, he did so.

But Bob was much, much

more than a storyteller. He had many other dimensions besides his speaking ability and the physical strength that allowed him to outrun the fire: He was a skilled and industrious worker, a devoted family man, and he had an abiding love for his fellow smokejumpers and the precious lands they risk their lives to protect.

Bob was a paper mill man, and he learned his profession from the ground up. He began that career at a mill in Lewiston, Idaho, after his two seasons of smokejumping. He worked there several years, until he moved to a new mill in Missoula in 1957 where he earned several promotions during the next decade. Taking a respite from that industry, he tried farming, then ran a hardware and farm implement store in Fairfield, Washington.

He studied at the University of Idaho, then earned a degree in accounting from Eastern Washington University in 1973 to qualify for a job with an Oregon engineering firm that wanted his skills. He used those skills all over the world, setting up mills in India, New Zealand, South Africa and Algeria.

Tiring of travel, he moved to Spokane in 1977 to work in the Inland Empire Paper Company mill, eventually retiring from that firm as production manager in 2000.

Along the way he picked up carpentry skills sufficient to build homes for his family in Lewiston and Frenchtown, Montana. He carried those skills back to the forest, working with me and other smokejumper volunteers every summer since 1996, rehabilitating historic structures and building foot bridges on forest trails.

Like many young men of the '40s, the first decade of smoke-

jumping, Bob earned his way into the program as a "ribies goon." He began in 1947, pulling gooseberries and currant bushes from the soil to prevent the spread of white pine blister rust which was ravaging the Northwest. He fibbed to get that job, boosting his age two years to 18. But they liked his work during that first season, so invited him back to help set up another camp the following summer.

A pair of visitors during that second summer, 1948, changed the course of his life. Two smokejumpers were detailed to the ribies project, and he learned from them that they were making "big bucks," \$1.30 per hour. That amounted to a 30-cent raise, so he applied and, based on outstanding evaluations from his bosses, he was accepted for new man training with the Missoula crew of 1949.

The first of his seven practice jumps was also his first airplane ride, and Bob later admitted to being nervous. "But when you get up there, you've got your buddies with you and you just couldn't not jump," he recounted.

The training was different in 1949 than in later years. Rookies were assigned to four-man squads and, "Although I had a speaking acquaintance with the other trainees, I only really knew the people in my squad," he told us.

After training he was sent alone to the Clearwater National Forest's Canyon Ranger Station to fill in for a man who hadn't reported for its trail maintenance crew. Consequently, when he was summoned back to the base as the fire season heated up, he knew well only **Walter Rumsey** (MSO-49), a member of his training squad. When he climbed aboard the C-47 for the Mann

Gulch Fire, his first fire jump, his fellow jumpers on that run were merely acquaintances with the exception of Rumsey.

The story of that fire and Bob and Rumsey's run for life is well known to most if not all smokejumpers. Those who don't may find the account in Norman Maclean's best seller, *Young Men and Fire*. While Bob disagreed with some points in it, the book is still the definitive account of the Mann Gulch Fire.

My personal acquaintanceship with Bob began in 1999 in Helena when Bob was the principal speaker at the commemoration of the Mann Gulch Fire's fiftieth anniversary. Learning that we lived not too far apart, we began meeting for lunch a few times each year with fellow jumpers **Hank Jones** (MSO-53) and **Fred Ebel** (MSO-57). The three of us "young bucks" were involved in the trails program and eventually we persuaded Bob to join us. He did, in 1996, and I'm proud to say he rejoined our crew every year since then. He obviously enjoyed working in the woods again and, to flatter us, I reckon he enjoyed our company too. Bob had signed up for our 2014 crew and, by God, we're really going to miss him, his humor, kindness and skills.

Although he labored at several jobs during his life, he obviously had a life-long fondness for the two seasons he spent as a jumper and for his fellow smokejumpers. As a memorial to his life, he and his wife Bertie asked that friends contribute to either the American Cancer Society or the National Smokejumper Association. And in an interview with a reporter for his college newspaper, he described smokejumping as, "The best damn job in the world."

Rest in peace, Bob. 🕊



Ghosts of M

August 1

Photos Courtesy NSA Ar



William J. Hellman



Eldon E. Diettert



Joseph B. Sylvia



James O. Harrison



Leonard



Silas R. Thompson



Stanley J. Reba

Mann Gulch

5, 1949

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Historical Evidence Concerning Wag Dodge's Escape Fire

by Chuck Sheley (Cave Junction '59)

Reprint from October 2001 issue
Smokeyjumper magazine.

Many have said that Wag Dodge (MSO-41) invented the "escape fire" in the midst of the blowup at Mann Gulch in 1949 as he and his men were moving ahead of the blaze. Starr Jenkins (CJ-48) forwarded a letter dated 1996 from Earl Schmidt (MSO-43) which seems to indicate that Dodge had considered this method of survival as early as 1943.

"You asked me to write you about what Wagner Dodge had said to us about using a small fire in which to stand in the face of a threatening blaze, and the ability to jump inside it. Inside the burned area a person would put his face to the ground where they would have scraped away the embers or ashes and thereby increased the possibility of survival. I will try to do this.

"Wag Dodge and Bill Wood (MSO-43) were my squadleaders during training in the spring of 1943. They were also the overhead at Big Prairie in the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area that summer. During that summer we had many conversations regarding firefighting and many other subjects.

"Wag discussed facing a threatening crown fire and protecting the face as well as possible with one's jacket. He also talked about carefully choosing the line of lightest fuel, running through it, holding one's breath, dropping behind the wall of fire, and clearing embers to bare ground to find a small amount of clear air.



Glenn Smith and Wagner Dodge 1943 (Courtesy Earl Schmidt)

"A second approach he discussed was to choose a place of light fuel, light it and run into it after it had burned an area. This is interesting, since six years later he would use this idea at the Mann Gulch Fire. I believe Wag would calmly pick the right time and spot and follow his plan without flinching. This is the kind of man I felt he was. Perhaps a weakness

in the theory was expecting young men to follow these procedures [without special training] in the face of such a terrifying situation [as that fire].

"I feel I knew Wag rather well, as I lived in the same tent with him for about five months and he was my foreman about 18 months. He also spotted me on my first fire jump." 🧑

Heroic Smokejumpers Relive Harrowing Adventures

by Dianna Troyer

(Copyright 2014, the Idaho Senior Independent.)

The stories retired Treasure Valley smokejumpers tell sound as if they're pitching script ideas to film producers.

"Sometimes, we're still surprised we survived," says **Tom Kovalicky** (MSO-61), 78, who lives in Grangeville, Idaho, and retired in 1991 as supervisor of the Nez Perce National Forest after a 31-year career with the agency in Wyoming and Idaho. "Now that so many years have passed, it's easier to talk about some of the things that happened to us."

Twice a month, approximately 15-30 National Smokejumper Association members between the ages of 55 and 96 who live in the Boise area meet for coffee and talk. They laugh and relive near-death escapes, fickle and ferocious wildfires, and dropping cargo into Laos and Cambodia. Ever adventure seekers, they're still vibrant outdoorsmen.

"We had close calls in the unusually active summer of 1961," Kovalicky said. "Records were broken regarding fire jumps. As a rookie I had 17, which was way above the average."

Twenty smokejumpers – including Kovalicky – almost died Aug. 4, 1961, while fighting a wildfire on Higgins Ridge near Grangeville in the Nez Perce forest. Their lives were saved due to their crew boss **Fritz Wolfrum** (MSO-53) and helicopter pilot **Rod Snider** (NCSB-51), who was flying for Johnson Flying Service in Missoula, Mont.

"Fritz was experienced and kept his head about our escape route and teamwork," Kovalicky said, "and Rod flew in unbelievable conditions to rescue us."

Snider, 84, a Boise resident, understood their plight, having been a smokejumper himself, based in Winthrop, Wash., from 1951 to 1954.

He recalled the relief and desperation he felt that day.

"A ranger wanted me to check on some jumpers who were dropped near the fire at noon," Snider said. "Unpredictable afternoon winds blew up suddenly, and the fire exploded, so we started looking for them. Finally about 5:30 p.m., I noticed orange movement. It was the color of their fire retardant shirts they had recently been issued."

He was relieved to have found them, but landing was nearly impossible due to poor visibility, heat, and 60-mph wind gusts.

On the ground, Kovalicky and others began running, carrying only water, toward a small landing spot that a previous trail crew had built atop a ridge. It was so hot, their fingers blistered when they tried to touch their metal helmets.

Finally able to land, Snider watched two smokejumpers dive into his cockpit. He lifted off and flew about 10 minutes to a meadow he had spotted where it was safe to land.

"It took three hours to pick them all up," Snider said. "The helicopter could hold only so much weight, so some men had to lay outside the cockpit on the tray by the skids and hold on."

Kovalicky, who was one of those who rode outside the helicopter, said, "There was so much smoke and confusion, and the roar of the fire and the copter. It was just like a scene out of a Hollywood film. The fire burned up 20 sets of jump gear, parachutes and personal gear bags."

For his rescue at Higgins Ridge, Snider was awarded the North American Forest Service Medal, presented for outstanding heroism; the Montana Pilots Association Pilot of the Year Award; the Stanley-Hiller Pilot of the Year Award by the Helicopter Association of America; and the Carnegie Medal for Bravery.

Kovalicky nominated Snider for the Forest Service award in 1976. "It was the first time that award had been offered since World War II. It was the year of the nation's bicentennial, and the perfect time to recognize him," Kovalicky said.

Snider was humble about receiving the awards, turning attention away from himself and instead to the helicopter he flew.

"The Bell 47G-3 turbo super-charged helicopter was ideal for that mission," he said. "I doubt any other copter could have done it."

Snider said flying was natural for him.

"It was something I wanted to do since I was a kid," he explained. "When I was 22, I bought my own plane, an Aeronca Chief, and learned to fly. Then I joined the Air Force and flew. There's nothing as wonderful as flying."

When he was discharged from the Air Force in 1957, he found a job flying for Johnson Flying Service for eight years. He then flew for Boise-Cascade from 1965 to 1982, when he retired. He has flown many types of helicopters and planes, including fire bombers and Learjets.

"I even built two planes myself," he said.

Snider also piloted a hang glider for 30 years.

"I flew with hawks and eagles. They look back at you, trying to understand what type of bird you are," he said.

After gliding in the skies of Idaho, California, Utah, Oregon and Washington, he quit eight years ago.

"It seemed the gliders were becoming heavier," he said, laughing. "Maybe that comes with age."

Snider still maintains his pilot's license, although he hasn't flown for a few years. These days, he seeks adventure on the ground, riding bicycles and cross country skiing.

During a recent coffee session, he and the other smokejumpers talked about a new book, *Kickers*, written by **Patrick Lee** (MYC-56), a former Idaho smokejumper and Washington, D.C., attorney who

retired to a ranch near the Sawtooth Mountains. The book is based on jumpers who worked for the CIA and dropped cargo including weapons into Laos and Cambodia. The men on the plane were nicknamed kickers for kicking cargo from the plane as it flew.

Dale "Rocky" Stone (MYC-57), 80, who lives outside Caldwell, worked as a kicker in Laos from 1968 to 1973. He had jumped out of McCall for four summers, then enlisted in the Army and was sent to Vietnam. With his jumping experience, his application to be a kicker was accepted.

"I was in my mid-30s, and the job appealed to me for the thrill of adventure, the monetary reward and the patriotic value," Stone said. "It was the type of operation I believed in. We dropped medical supplies, pots and pans, and 'hard rice,' which is what we called ammunition."

After being discharged, Stone returned to the Boise area, where he worked in sales and retired in 1991. He runs a small acreage with farm animals.

"Those Idaho summers being a smokejumper were unforgettable. I felt at home in the mountains and loved the thrill of the job," he said. 🦋

BOOK REVIEW: KICKERS - A NOVEL OF THE SECRET WAR

by *Kirkus Reviews*

In his debut novel, **Patrick Lee** (MYC-56) capably delivers an untold chronicle of the Vietnam War for military enthusiasts and anti-war readers alike.

Lee's protagonists are "smokejumpers," U.S. Forest Service firefighters, who daringly parachute into remote regions of the American West to battle forest fires. In 1961, officers in the CIA see this as a perfect skillset and hope to use the college-age daredevils as part of America's undeclared war in Laos.

The author, a former smokejumper, smartly focuses on three recruits – Thanasis Mavros, Charlie Mazzarelli and Charles Stewart Parnell "Dog" Touhey – and their interactions with various natives during their decade-long tour of duty. For this trio, the new job means excitement and good

money in an exotic, foreign land.

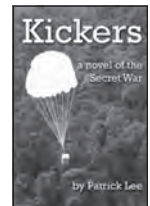
Their experiences mirror the United States' overall secret mission in the Southeast Asian country, fought largely with deniable foreign proxies in order to avoid a potentially nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union.

At first, the smokejumpers serve as "kickers," shoving supplies rigged with parachutes out of aircraft to help the Meo – a primitive, native tribe that's attempting to disrupt supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The tribesmen are waging a guerrilla war against the communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces. Before long, the smokejumpers find themselves training the Meo to jump behind enemy lines. But in the end, mounting losses, self-serving policies and betrayal lead to disillusionment among the

smokejumpers left standing.

Lee, a retired lawyer, has done meticulous research, partly based on interviews with surviving real-life smokejumpers. His engrossing novel highlights the sacrifices of those who didn't receive proper credit for their covert-ops services decades ago. The author primarily tells their saga in a straightforward, chronological manner, but he also cleverly weaves in a subplot about a smokejumper listed as missing in action who isn't identified until late in the novel. Overall, his characters' evolutions while in-country are heartbreakingly believable.

A riveting tale of an American tragedy that's packed with adventure and local color. 🦋



Taking An Ax To Traditional Forest Management

by Robert Nelson

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Wildfires destroyed an estimated 6,500 square miles of U.S. forest lands in 2013, an area larger than the state of Connecticut. One reason fires blaze through so much land is poor wildfire management from the U.S. Forest Service. But instead of continuing to try to tweak the ossified bureaucracy, we should borrow an idea from public-education reformers: Create “charter forests,” like charter schools.

Washington has known about the mismanagement of the Forest Service – whose 35,000 employees are responsible for approximately 10 percent of land in the U.S. – for years. In 1998, for example, the Government Accountability Office reported that “catastrophic wildfires threaten resources and communities” throughout the West.

Much of the problem, it concluded, was the fact that “the Forest Service’s decision-making process is broken.” Fifteen years later, it still is.

The Forest Service understands that it has serious problems. In a 2002 report, the agency lamented that it was operating “within a statutory, regulatory, and administrative framework that has kept the agency from effectively addressing rapid declines in forest health.”

The total forest acres burned in 11 western states set records successively in 1988, 1996, 2000, 2006, 2007 and 2012.

In part, a philosophical shift is to blame for these terrible records. During the 1990s, the Forest Service’s old philosophy of “multiple-use management” of forests was succeeded by a new outlook of “ecosystem management.” This placed ecological goals above more utilitarian considerations, resulting in a radical curtailing of timber harvesting, forest thinning and other more aggressive actions that would have helped to address the continuing fire problem.

Desperate for improvement, in 2009 Congress enacted the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act, or Flame, which required the secretaries of agriculture and interior to develop a “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.”

Typical of the glacial pace of federal bureaucracy, the report is still not final, more than three years after its statutory deadline.

What’s needed is a new management model for the national forests, the type public-education reformers have been experimenting with for more than two decades.

Charter schools are one of the few reform initiatives supported by both parties. That’s because charter schools work: Recent research at Harvard, MIT and Princeton has confirmed that well-run charter schools are achieving remarkable success compared with traditional public schools in improving the educational achievements of disadvantaged students in inner cities.

The secret is autonomy. Freed from the bureaucratic straitjacket of teachers unions, charter-school leaders can hire and fire teachers more freely. They can also enforce standards for teachers and students that might spark protests and union grievances at a traditional public school. Charter schools take more risks, but they are held accountable for the results.

This is the model that the U.S. Forest Service needs. Certain federal forest lands, while still “owned” by the federal government, would be managed independently as charter forests. A decentralized charter forest would operate under the control of a local board of directors, which might include local government officials, economists, environmentalists, and recreational and commercial users of forest resources.

Like a charter school, which receives public support according to the number of students enrolled, a charter forest would receive federal funds to support its operations as determined by some appropriate formula based on criteria such as the size of the forest area, the ways in which it is used, and past federal spending.

The charter-forest managers, like a charter-school principal, would have freedom to hire and fire employees, bypassing cumbersome federal civil-service procedures.

The charter forest also would be exempt from current requirements for public land-use planning and the writing of environmental impact statements. These requirements long ago ceased to perform their ostensible function of improving public land decision making. They have instead become open invitations for litigation – effectively transferring much of the management control over national forests to litigants and federal judges.

Charter forests would operate under federal oversight, including broad land-use goals and performance stan-

dards relating to the maintenance of environmental quality. But they would have the flexibility to develop and implement innovative solutions to the severe problems of forest fire, spreading disease and other threats today to national forests, especially in the West.

In a 2013 survey, 2 million federal workers were asked about the quality of leadership, the level of morale, and other management conditions in their agencies. The

responses ranked the Forest Service as worse than 260 out of 300 similar federal agencies.

Given this – and the long record of past failure – aren't charter forests worth a try? 🌲

Mr. Nelson is a professor of environmental policy at the University of Maryland and a senior fellow at the Independent Institute in Oakland, Calif.

Alabama Track & Field Legend Charley Moseley Was Larger Than Life

by Christopher Walsh, University of Alabama Sports Information

One glance at his bio and, not only does it scream the word “legend,” but one almost has to wonder if Charles E. “Charley” Moseley (CJ-62) was the inspiration for the “Most Interesting Man in the World” ad campaign by Dos Equis beer.

Charley wanted to be a University of Alabama football player for Paul W. “Bear” Bryant, which may have been one of the few things in his life that he didn't get to attempt, only to instead become one of the biggest track and field stars in Crimson Tide history.

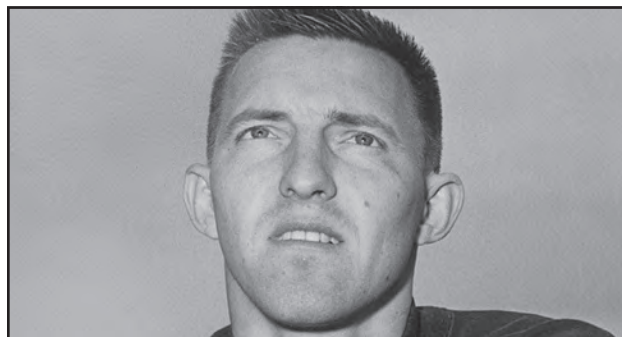
He graduated with both business and law degrees from Alabama, but became a smokejumper, a kicker (not the football kind), worked in insurance, got his real estate license and spent 15 years in Oklahoma with Wildcat Oil Industry. His spirit of adventure may have only been exceeded by his sense of fearlessness, which is really saying something because Moseley used to loan his car to his college friend Joe Namath to go on dates.

“Yeah, he did a lot in his lifetime,” Moseley's son John said about the 73-year-old who passed away April 8 in Mobile. “In everything he's done, from an early age until he died, if you could only say one thing about him it's he was gracious and always gave to anyone who was in need.”

To give an idea of what kind of athlete Moseley was, consider that heading into this outdoor track season his long jump of 25 feet, 10 inches in 1963 is still the seventh-best in Crimson Tide history.

Initially a walk-on, he set several school records and at one point held Southeastern Conference records in the long jump, triple jump and the high hurdles.

Moseley was the first Alabama athlete to score points in the NCAA Championships when he placed fourth in both the high hurdles and long jump, and dominated more than a few dual meets.



Charley Moseley (Courtesy Univ. Alabama Sports Info. Dept.)

For example, against Memphis State in 1963 he won all six events he entered: the high jump, broad jump, pole vault, high hurdles, intermediate hurdles and the triple jump.

“I didn't get three minutes sleep the night before that first meet, but I was a happy sapsucker after that,” he told the *Tuscaloosa News* in 1963.

After a similar result against Houston, another newspaper referred to him as a “one-man gang” long before the pro wrestler with the same name became popular in the late 1980s.

Coach Harold “Red” Drew once dubbed him the most outstanding track man at Alabama, which Moseley backed up by being named the 1963 winner of the Hugo Friedman Award as the Crimson Tide's best all-around athlete of the year.

But even then, Moseley was already heading down an unusual path.

“When he was first at Alabama as a freshman, he met another student in one of the cafeterias – this is the story as told by him to me – and the guy was talking about going to the Pacific Northwest to put out forest fires for a part-time job in the summertime,” John Moseley

said. "He'd grown up in southwest Alabama where my grandmother managed a large game estate, and we did controlled burning of the forests down there."

A fan of dramatic Zane Grey cowboy stories, Charley pursued the opportunity and worked the first summer on a ground crew, but met a couple of smokejumpers who parachuted into remote areas to combat fires. It's still considered one of the best ways to extinguish or contain blazes before they become a major problem, and has inspired numerous movies over the years.

Moseley jumped from Cave Junction in 1962-63, then Redmond in 1964 and Fairbanks during 1969-71.

"He just thought these guys were bigger than life," John Moseley said. "He wanted to try and be one and ended up being selected for the training."

After graduating, Moseley worked for Air America in Southeast Asia, which was covertly owned by the United States Government. While most military personnel were already tied up with escalation of the Vietnam War, civilians with extensive parachute experience were in demand – especially smokejumpers who could pass the security screening.

"That's kind of originally where they started recruiting from, and it was all word of mouth," said John Moseley, who was subsequently born in Bangkok, Thailand. His father's job as a "kicker" was to deploy cargo out of the back of a flying plane (while making sure he didn't accidentally go with it).

By the time he came back to Tuscaloosa and earned his law degree in 1969, Charley and his wife, Jean, also had a daughter, Molly, but local law firms weren't paying too much. So he went back to work as a smokejumper for three seasons for the Bureau of Land Management, this time in Alaska, where another daughter, Casey, was born in Fairbanks.

That was also where he had a memorable meeting with law enforcement during the early stages to one of the extensive and expensive American investigations of the 20th century.

In 1971, a man dubbed D.B. Cooper hijacked and threatened to blow up a plane full of passengers, extorted \$200,000 from its owner, Northwest Orient, then leaped from a Boeing 727 with 21 pounds of \$20 bills strapped to his torso somewhere between Seattle and Portland, Ore. Neither he, nor the money, was ever seen again, and it remains the only unsolved air piracy in American aviation history.

"The morning after D.B. Cooper left the aircraft over the Pacific Northwest, the FBI showed up at the parachute loft in Fairbanks, Alaska, and my dad was one of the top suspects," Jon Moseley said. "There are still several people who think he did it, but my dad had an alibi. He was in the parachute loft and there were several

witnesses in Fairbanks."

Still, it makes another great story about the likeable and popular Moseley who, when visiting the Capstone, would tease the Crimson Tide track athletes chasing his records.

"He never met anyone who was a stranger," John Moseley said. "He was like the more successful politicians like Bill Clinton. I've read that once they meet you they know your name and (remember) all the details of your first encounter with them. That's the way my dad was. He had an uncanny ability to recall details and names of people he probably hadn't encountered during the past 30 years." 🦋

A memorial service for Moseley was held by his family June 16 at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base Museum outside Cave Junction, Ore. The family requests that memorials be made to the NSA Good Samaritan Fund, c/o Chuck Sheley, 10 Judy Ln., Chico, CA 95926.

Our Wonderful Aircraft

by Jerry Hagen (Missoula '75)

We jumped a "Doug load" on a fire in the St. Joe N.F. in 1977. I was the second stick out.

After gathering up my gear and seeing what I thought was the last stick to jump, I waited for the cargo drop. The plane flew over us heading down-canyon. It was supposed to turn around, come back and drop the cargo. We waited and waited. We no longer could hear the engines.

Finally the jumpers in the last stick made it up to our spot. They told us that they had to get out early up in the canyon because the aircraft had lost *both* fuel pumps. The pilots told them to bail out immediately or ride it out with them.

It didn't take them long to decide, even though they were not over the jump spot. They said the co-pilot was frantically pumping the manual fuel pump, and the two engines were sputtering as the men went out the door. We found out later that the plane was fortunate enough to make it to the airstrip in Kellogg or Wallace, Idaho.

So, there we were ... no tools, no cargo. The 200-acre fire had pretty much made its run during the heat of the day, and wasn't doing much, other than creeping around. Finally, after contemplating our options, we gathered up some scattered alder limbs and started scratching a line down the hill.

After morning broke, a helicopter came in with tools, pumps, hose, etc. We finished the line, set up a hose lay, and were out of there by that evening. That fire definitely made me feel that we were not worth crap without our tools! 🦋

Cave Junction Smokejumper Base Provides A Tour Through History

by Cecil Hicks (North Cascades '62)

When I trained and jumped out of the Northern Cascade Smokejumper Base at Winthrop, Wash., in 1962, I never got a chance to travel to our fellow Northwest smokejumper base at Cave Junction, Ore. All I really knew about the base was it was about the same size as ours.

Also, the CJ jumpers I worked with on fires, or on projects at NCSB and at the Bureau of Land Management base in Fairbanks, Alaska (where I later jumped in 1963, '64, '66, '67, '68 and '70), bragged about their base and described it as being in the middle of the Gobi Desert. I'd also heard numerous war stories about tall tree landings (all true, of course) in that part of southwestern Oregon.

I knew some of the tall tree-landing stories must have had some truth to them. For example, when Winthrop's Twin Beech flew to Cave Junction during that summer of 1962 with a backup crew onboard during a fire bust, the jumpers exchanged their standard 150-foot letdown ropes for 300-footers.

It wasn't until 51 years later, in the fall of 2013, that I finally made a visit to the Cave Junction jump base, while on an assignment to interview a beekeeper who lived near Cave Junction. My wife Maureen and I are both retired elementary school teachers living in northern Idaho, near Sandpoint, where I'd taught fourth graders for 17 years and she taught first graders. During this autumn trip last year, we were driving down the Oregon coast on vacation heading to northern California to view the giant Redwood trees.

While in the area, I'd scheduled a magazine article interview with a beekeeper who lived in the Illinois River Valley, a few miles east of Cave Junction. Of course, I'd also planned to finally visit the CJ jump base.

While I'm not a beekeeper, I should mention that 17 years ago our oldest daughter married a commercial beekeeper in north Idaho and it sparked my interest in honeybees. About 15 years ago, I started writing freelance travel and feature articles for several different magazines on a regular, part-time basis.

However, during the past decade, the bulk of my article writing (some 70 articles) has been for the major beekeeping industry magazine – American Bee Journal.



Cecil Hicks (Courtesy C. Hicks)

Now, when we take vacations and trips, I line up interviews and write beekeeping articles as well as a few travel features. Nearly all of the income from these articles goes into our travel fund.

I knew that the base, which opened during World War II, operated for some 39 years before closure in the early 1980s. When the base closed, ownership of the buildings and the surrounding property had been transferred over from the U.S. Forest Service to the Josephine County government.

For nearly the next three decades, the base was vacated and sat neglected. I understand that the whole base was on the brink of being bulldozed under, a few years ago, when county officials finally agreed to lease the base to the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum group.

Anyway, the Siskiyou National Forest's smokejumper base at Cave Junction is now a museum, and during the summer tourist season volunteers provide visitors with guided tours through the various buildings and grounds. Displayed on the walls of the loft, dispatch office, and mess hall are hundreds of smokejumper

photographs, news media smokejumper stories, and a string of historical firefighting and smokejumping background informational posters.

As I stepped out of my car last fall at the CJ jump base, which is adjacent to a mile-long paved airstrip, it felt almost like stepping back in history. A touch of nostalgia passed through me as I looked around. I almost expected to hear a fire-call siren going off and seeing jumpers sprinting from the mess hall or project work areas, heading to the loft to suit up.

As I looked around the base, I marveled at the present-day condition of the base and its buildings that are nestled among the evergreens. Thanks to the efforts of former CJ smokejumpers, friends, family members and volunteer members of the National Smokejumper Association, the base is nearly restored to its original condition.

For several years now, annual volunteer work crews gathered in the summer to spend a week or so rebuilding, remodeling, repainting, replacing wood rot, re-roofing and refurbishing the base. They did a great job.

Parked on the tarmac in front of the parachute loft is the original, silver-colored, Twin Beech jump plane, now wingless, that was stationed on site for years during the fire season.

The aircraft was transported to the base overland by truck last year. In order to haul it on the Oregon highway system, the wings were removed, but are sched-

uled to be reinstalled during the summer of 2014.

As I strolled from my car toward the parachute loft, I encountered **Gary Buck** (CJ-66), a retired smokejumper who lives in the area, whom I'd never met before. He was giving a base tour to a small group of visitors. I introduced myself and joined in. The tour ended with a question-and-answer session in the mess hall.

Gary trained at Cave Junction in 1966 and also jumped out of CJ through 1967 and again during 1971-80. He jumped out of Fairbanks for the BLM during 1981-84.

Later, as we walked through the loft, I saw partially rigged parachutes laid out on the tables and jump suits with harnesses and helmets hung in the ready room; several parachutes were hanging in the parachute well. Even the sewing machines that were scattered around the room were the original machines that had seen years of duty and repaired hundreds of rips and tears in parachutes. All in all I was quite impressed.

All too soon it was time for me to leave and drive back to Crescent City, Calif. (just across the line from Oregon, about an hour and a half away), where my wife and I were staying. I really enjoyed my visit to the base and meeting fellow smokejumper Buck. We even managed to retell a few jump stories (all true, of course) and discussed various jumpers from out of our past whom we both knew. 🔦



(Courtesy C. Hicks)

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE THE FENCE



by **Chris Sorensen**
(Associate)

ERIC HIPKE (NCSB-90) has hit one out of the park. I mean, he hit it 30 feet over the centerfield fence! As audio-visual specialist at NIFC in the Forest Service Refresher Unit, Eric produced a video on the South Canyon Fire which was released in April.

This is one for the ages. It's that good. This video will be viewed by firefighters for generations to come. Eric produced this video with no money and no budget, other than a \$400 copy of Google Earth Pro.

I have a little geographic information systems (GIS) background and I am amazed at the level of animation in this video. I have forwarded the link to the video to one of my former professors and one of my college classmates – who now teaches GIS in Pennsylvania – as an excellent example of what can be done with Google Earth.

If you know of awards inside or outside government for documentary film work or video production, please nominate

Eric and the video. Alternatively, contact me with the information and I will write the nomination myself. This is an award winner – let's not let pass the opportunity to get Eric some recognition.

You can access the video at: www.nifc.gov/wfstar/library_casestudies.html.

I warn you: this video is intense. It's for training, not entertainment. Everyone in the fire service needs to view this video.

Officials in Washington, D.C. have directed the Missoula Technology and Development Center to begin a review of the fire shelter system. Originally, the review

spring for improving emergency medical equipment and training.

The helicopter and trucks on the Upper Colorado River Inter-agency Fire Management Unit are now equipped with automated external defibrillators and backboards. Josh saw a need, sold the need to management, and they let him run with it. It's great to see leadership in action!

Regretfully, the West has lost another gem. The Ford Trimotor, owned by the Evergreen Aviation Museum, was sold to the Liberty Air Museum in Port Clinton, Ohio, for \$1.5 million. The future of the museum remains in

Officials in Washington, D.C. have directed the Missoula Technology and Development Center to begin a review of the fire shelter system.

was scheduled to begin next year. It is unknown if the Yarnell Hill Fire had any bearing on conducting the review a year earlier.

We had a young woman in our department who had a degree in Industrial Ceramics. She was only with us for a year before moving on to a better paying job. I would have enjoyed picking her brain about heat-resistant materials, but both of us were too busy working on separate projects.

A tip of the hard hat to **Josh Graham** (NIFC-05). Josh is now an assistant fire management officer on the White River National Forest. He received the regional forester's 2013 Safety Award this

doubt as various airplanes in the collection are sold off. Regardless of the other financial problems the Evergreen Museum is having, with a few exceptions most museums in the West struggle financially. I don't know if we will ever get a Trimotor display in a fire-related museum in the West.

A remembrance was held in Glenwood Springs, Colo., July 6, the 20th anniversary of the South Canyon Fire. Much to the credit of the organizers, blowhard politicians – it's an election year – and high-level resource agency officials were not invited to speak.

This column is dedicated to **Bob Sallee** (MSO-49). 🧯

Former Jumper Wins 2013 Wildland Fire Leadership Award

by Leana Schelvan, University of Montana Communications

University of Montana Prof. **Carl Seielstad** (MYC-93) recently earned the 2013 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award from a national interagency wildfire committee.

The Lead by Example Award is given to firefighters who are exceptional mentors and leaders. In selecting him for the award, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group leadership subcommittee noted Seielstad's visionary leadership. He is the first University of Montana faculty member to receive the honor.

Seielstad has more than 20 years of operational fire experience as a hotshot crew member, smoke-jumper and Type 3 incident commander. He earned his doctorate from the university in 2003, is a faculty member in the College of Forestry and Conservation, and a research program leader at the National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis.

Seielstad jumped from McCall in the 1993-2002 and 2004 seasons. He has two uncles who were smokejumpers – **Julio Bilbao** (IDC-64) jumped 12 years and **Frank Bilbao** (MYC-67) put in two seasons.

Casey Teske, fire scientist at the National Center for Landscape Fire Analysis, nominated Seielstad for the award.

According to Montana graduate student **Tyson Atkinson** (MSO-11), not all universities understand the dilemma students face in scheduling and training for school versus fighting fire.

"Carl has made that tension the

essence of his efforts at UM," Atkinson said. "In his vision, learning opportunities in the field are vital to giving students the principles and values of a motivated and safe wildland firefighter.

"Carl's unique ability to cross scientific and management boundaries have had major impacts on the careers of those fortunate enough to work with him."

Seielstad established in 2008 the prescribed fire practicum, a service-learning course for undergraduate and graduate students. He partners with The Nature Conservancy in Georgia to bring six to 10 students to the southeastern United States each January to run prescribed burns that restore longleaf pine habitat. More than 50 University of Montana students have participated in the prescribed fire practicum.

Seielstad led the College of Forestry and Conservation in 2011 to establish and gain approval for a minor in wildland fire sciences and management. Since autumn semester 2013, University of Mon-

tana students can work toward a minor in Fire Science and management or a bachelor's in Science of Resource Conservation with a wildland fire emphasis.

Seielstad advises 10 graduate students annually and is the adviser of the student chapter of the Association for Fire Ecology. Originally from West Virginia, he completed his bachelor's degree at Dartmouth College and earned his master's degree in Geography from the University of Georgia.

He has served as incident commander on various wildfires, including the Conger Fire outside Seeley Lake in 2007 and the Langille Fire in Washington state in 2009.

The award is named for Paul Gleason, who was a wildland fire leader whose career spanned several decades before he died in 2003. Among many accomplishments, he developed the LCES concept (Lookout, Communication, Escape Routes, Safety Zones) that is now a foundation of firefighter safety. 🧯

Luke Sheehy (RDD-09)

Memorial Golf Tournament

The **Luke Sheehy Memorial "Lousy" Golf Tournament** will be held Saturday, October 18th, at Bidwell Golf Course in Chico, CA. The cost is \$95 per person, which includes 18 holes of golf, cart, dinner and dancing. The tournament is being sponsored by the Stone Cutters, a philanthropic organization, and the Sheehy Family. Proceeds will go towards a scholarship in Luke's name. Contact Jon Foy at 530-570-1110 or email jonfoy@gmail.com.

Klump Pump Offers Many Significant Advantages

by Jim Klump (Redding '64)

For the past several years, I've been reading comments here in *Smokeyjumper* magazine that many NSA members are dismayed at how the various agencies (mainly the U.S. Forest Service) are fighting fires. And I agree.

However, the two largest losses of lives on fires in recent years have not been under Forest Service jurisdiction. One was the BLM in Colorado and the other in Arizona.

The common thread which exists with these two fires is that these officials sat there and skunked around for a considerable length of time. I wonder if, by any agency not taking aggressive initial-attack action, they are creating a potential time bomb.

Putting out fires creates a safer environment for firefighters, saves taxpayer money and protects the environment.

I want to introduce you to a machine I invented some 11 years ago now. The troops in the field named it the "Klump Pump." The idea of this machine sprang from my years as a smokejumper, Type-1 operations section chief, and district fire management officer.

This machine, when you look at it, is a "no-brainer." It's a Type II engine without a chassis. The 1,000-gallon capacity, 2,200-foot hose complement and fitting complement fit the Type II engine classification. The decision to use a machine such as this is also very simple. If an incident decision maker asks him/herself, "If I can get a conventional engine on this, would I?"

If he or she can't, the logical so-



(Courtesy Jim Klump)

lution then is another "no-brainer" – order Klump Pumps!

We have 11 Klump Pumps. They are delivered to an incident on either two- or three-unit trailers. They are unloaded at the helibase and setup takes 20-30 minutes per machine. The leveling jacks are attached. Hose, fittings and support equipment are stowed into their compartment for air transport.

The lifting harness is fixed to the four lifting points. The machine was designed aerodynamically. It remains quite stable in flight at 80 knots.

Once delivered out to the line, it's a matter of a few minutes to level, begin filling and hose deployment.

The uses for the machine include initial attack, support of

burnout and back-fire operations, mop up, remote helispot dust abatement and crash and fire rescue, reinforcement of a safety zone, and protection of remote structures and other sensitive features.

Some testimonials:

- "I've used this machine on several fires. It adds a degree of aggressive firefighting we haven't had before. In 2008, the Klump Pump was instrumental in picking up the entire south end of the Basin Complex. It extends your ability to burn out several hours each day. A few years later, I employed five Klump Pumps on the Backbone Fire in northwestern California, and they were instrumental

in picking the fire up in one week. This fire had the potential to burn for several more months.”

—*John Truitt, operations section chief, T-1, U.S. Forest Service*

- “Three of us picked up a 2 1/2 acre fire spotting in sub-alpine fir. We stopped it at 3 1/2 acres with a Klump Pump. It had the potential to go to project size.”

—*Todd Sexton, lead crewmember, Caribou-Targhee Helitack*

- “In addition to the added safety feature of having water in reserve, the KLUMP PUMP cuts the need to staff line in heavier fuels by days. I plan on training my crew on the use of the machines this spring.”

—*Robert Daniel, superintendent, Feather River Hotshots (R5)*

These are just a few of the comments from operations people.

We have a long way to go with regard to this machine being used

to its fullest capacity. I recommend quicker dispatch and pre-positioning to anticipated hot spots. Also, we need more dialogue in the various agencies by upper management.

If you wish to obtain more information regarding this innovative apparatus, please visit the following websites:

www.uni-engine.com; www.firechief.com/wf-technology/klump-pump-takes-flight?eid=forward; www.youtube.com/watch?v=43uXQ8Y0xXU 📺

Oxbow Creek Fire Payette NF Aug. 1953

by Wild Bill Yensen (MYC-53)

This fire is one that I remember very well for several reasons. It was in my rookie year (Neds had not become the name for rookies till ten years later), it was my sixth fire jump, it was near Hells Canyon, and it resulted in my first and most serious injury.

The fire was a class B, so we jumped a full Ford load (eight men) at about 0900. I think **Wayne Webb** (MYC-46) was the spotter. The spot was a sagebrush-covered side hill. **Loyle Washam** (MYC-51) and **Spence Miller** (MYC-52) were first out, then **Pat Daly** (MYC-51) and **Bob Donnelley** (MYC-52), then **Ron Siple** (MYC-53) and myself, and last **Ed Hanson** (MYC-53) and **Darrell Weber** (MYC-53). I can thank **Leo Cromwell's** (IDC-66) great work in recording all the data in the CD he produced, “Who is Who Region 4 Smokejumping 1943-2002,” for all the correct names.

The thing I remember most is my landing, which I thought would be fine, in that nice soft ground. When my feet hit, my right foot went into a gopher hole! In doing my “Allen Roll,” I pivoted and in the process of that heard a pop! I got up and jumped around checking my ankle, which seemed OK, packed up my gear and went to work. We all looked around and wondered, “Where is Spence?” He was not with us. We spread out and started looking. Under a big snag there was a pile of branches and sticks, and someone noticed some silk under there. We threw the sticks and branches off and there was the chute, and Spence was

under it out cold. He had crashed into that snag breaking off branches till he hit a big branch that stopped him. Then it broke and dropped him into a depression under the tree. He hit and one leg took all the shock and his knee came up, hit him in the chin and knocked him out. Then the chute and all those branches piled on top of him.

We pulled him out of there and revived him. When he tried to get up, he found he could not extend his knee; so he was really disabled. That meant we needed help so we had the Ford drop us a radio. In those days all we had were SPF radio sets. They were a square box, and you had to string out a 100-ft antenna and hang it way up a tree. It transmitted long wavelengths that would bounce off the ionosphere, and you could talk out of a canyon bottom. Anyway, it worked and we told the Dispatcher about Spence and they sent a Packer out to get him.

By that time it was about 1100, so we all went to work on the fire. Two hours later it was lined and we were mopping up. Also, my ankle had really started to hurt. I hobbled around mopping up till suppertime, and by then I knew I could never walk out of there.



Wild Bill Yensen 1955
(Courtesy B. Yensen)

We were eating supper when the packer showed up with his bell mare and one mule. Now poor old Lindy had two hurt jumpers and only one mule, so he put Spence on the Bell Mare and I had to ride the mule. It was getting dark when we started out with Lindy carrying a lantern and Spence and me following. Hells Canyon is steep and we had to go up a set of switchbacks on a rockslide. That horse's shoes were throwing sparks as she stumbled through those rocks. My mule went all the way up and never missed a step.

It was a pitch-dark night with nothing but stars when we came to a saddle at the rim of the canyon. Beyond the saddle there was a huge expanse of sagebrush with a dozen or so trails coming into the saddle. A herd of cattle had gone through since Lindy had, so all of his tracks were obliterated. Being so dark he had no clue which of those trails was the one to take. He picked one and walked out a ways, came back, picked another and did that again. I decided to just give the mule his head, and he took right off down a trail. In about a quarter mile I saw a tree with a blaze, so I knew we were OK and hooted them in.

We got to the truck, loaded the animals, and drove to Council's Hospital. They took care of Spence and then looked at me. They said I had a nice sprain. I asked when I could jump on it again. I told them I was a PE major and had taped many ankles for football players the previous fall. They said just take it easy for a while and tape it well. When I thought I could use it again, go ahead. They took us back to McCall. The next morning I worked packing chutes which was OK, same thing the next day. Then the weekend.

It was feeling sort of good, but I didn't want back on the list yet, so I decided to go down to Parma to see my favorite uncle, Art Yensen, and his family Saturday morning. We had a good time. He had three boys, Rick, Bob, and Nick, ages 10, 8, and 6. We wrestled around on the grass. They had a Great Dane dog named "Sisser." She would watch and as long as the boys were on top it was OK, but if I got on top she would knock me down.

After supper I started to head back to McCall and I realized it was Saturday Night, and Homedale still had their Saturday Night Dance. I left Homedale at the end of my sophomore year in '49, so I figured there would be girls I knew so I went to the dance. My ankle was good enough to dance on, so I danced for three hours and had a great time. I picked up a girl named Donna Thompson who was two years behind me in school. We spent a couple of hours, had a good visit, and I took her home and went back to McCall.

Talk about the good old days! We were still using all the original equipment: canvas jump suits padded

with felt, cotton harnesses (that could be adjusted only when off) with snaps that were hooked to V-rings on the risers of the flat pack, 28-ft chutes (made of twill) with OD guidelines for steering. We also had 22-ft reserves (they would save your neck but not your ass), leather helmets. We put our jump gear in Beamus Seamless sacks and packed out (every time) with all our stuff in E-bags. Boy, have things changed by the time I hung up my toggles in 1986. 🐾

Missoula Jumpers To Offer Shane Ewing Scholarship

THE MISSOULA SMOKEJUMPER Welfare Fund is awarding a \$1000 scholarship to a deserving individual. This scholarship will be awarded annually on January 15th each year. The scholarship is in memory of **Shane Ewing** (MSO-04) who died tragically in December 2009 when a car struck him in Missoula, MT. Shane was well respected as a Missoula Smokejumper and a father. We hope that this fund will be one of many things honoring his time with us. We all get to see a glimpse of Shane Ewing now and again when his daughter Shaye comes by the base.

Requirements to Apply for the Scholarship

1. Must be a current or former smokejumper or have a direct family relation to a current or former smokejumper (spouse or children).
2. Must be used for educational purposes. Proof of enrollment (College/University) is required.

How to Apply

Write a one page Essay covering the two topics below:

1. How the smokejumping program has impacted your life.
2. The type of educational program you are pursuing and how you are going to put that education to use.

Please email your Essays to apferruzzi1@yahoo.com. The Deadline for Applications is December 1st and the winner will be notified by January 15th.

Smokejumpers Create Generations Of Brotherhood

by Monica Ortiz Uribe

(Copyright 2014, *Fronteras – The Changing American Desk.*)

It's fire season. When a wildfire starts, some of the first to put their lives on the line are smokejumpers. These daredevils fall from the sky to work in some of the most rugged and remote spots in the country.

Jeff Davis (MSO-57) is a retired smokejumper who survived 22 years in the business. Walking into his small apartment in Silver City, N.M., is like walking into a jungle. It's consumed by five-foot-tall ferns.

"I got a sign up there that says, *I need the high country.* I'm not any good down in these neon, plastic valleys," he said.

By "high country," Davis means the wilderness. Just north of Silver City is the Gila National Forest, which includes the nation's first designated wilderness. Davis spent nine fire seasons there chasing smoke.

"So I'm trying to bring the wilderness down here," he said.

At age 77 with a fragile back, Davis' backcountry days are done. Still he manages to run eight miles every day. Staying in shape is programmed into his psyche. It was a key part of his life as a smokejumper – arguably the most thrilling job in the U.S. Forest Service.

"We're firefighters," Davis said. "The only difference is our means of access to the fire. We jump in. We go in by parachute. The purpose is we can get there fast – faster than anybody."

The idea is to put the fire out before it has a chance to grow.

"We used to drop 1,000 feet above ground level," he said. "From 1,000 feet you've got 11 seconds from the door to the ground if your chute doesn't open. Time kinda slows down. You're right in the moment. You're acting just by instinct."

Smokejumpers often drop into unfamiliar terrain. Once on the ground, they're pretty much on their own. They've got a chunk of map and 120 pounds of gear on their backs.

"We grab our tools and we go to the fire," Davis said.

They put the fire out – not with water, but with muscle. Using shovels and pulaskis they dig a line around the flames. The line resembles a forest trail.

"The temperature might be 100, 110 even," Davis said. "And we're just sweating like pigs – radiant heat

was just burning us good."

The smokejumpers might stick around for days watching for hot spots. They camp out and contend with the elements – whether it's a rainstorm or a grizzly bear. But that never bothered Davis. "It wasn't a job. It wasn't a career. It was a love affair," he said.

He describes the easy fires like paid vacations with spectacular scenery. Then there were the ugly fires – wild, uncontrollable blazes that cost firefighters their lives. Davis witnessed these in California where the greasewood acts like matches doused in diesel.

"You watch a whole hillside just suddenly painted with fire," he said. "It went up that hill so fast you couldn't even imagine it. And the sound you can't hear and the fury of it." Some develop into firestorms with temperatures that can reach 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. They'll even create their own weather.

Davis remembers rescuing a crew from the destructive Coyote Fire near Santa Barbara in 1964. He saw a man staggering up a cliff with his arms stretched out.

"So I went running over to him and I grabbed his arm to pull him out of that burn and all his skin on his whole arm slid off like a barbecued chicken," he said.

Today, Davis' apartment is a shrine to his profession. Old photographs cover the walls. He makes model smokejumpers with clay and Barbie dolls. It's obvious he misses it.

"There was an old jumper buddy of mine. A couple of years ago he calls me and says, 'I think we can get you out on one of these skydiving clubs and get you a jump,'" Davis said.

The only catch was Davis had to do it strapped to another skydiver – for health reasons.

"I says, 'Hell, no – I'm not cargo. I'm a jumper. I'm either jumping or forget that.' If I got a chance today, I'd do her. My fake hip would fall out and stick in the air and my pacemaker would take some extra thumps."

These days Davis gets by on a modest disability check. The younger jumpers know that. At the end of fire season they'll leave a care package at his door.

"We're brothers," Davis said. "Whether they're men or women, we're bros. We cover each other's butts. We watch each other, we save each other's lives or we hold the ones that die in our arms. And we get them out of there – we don't leave anybody behind." 🐻



Major Boddicker with the primary Alaska firefighting tool: a small spruce tree. (Courtesy M. Boddicker)

‘We Been Killing Each Other For 500 Years’

by Major L. Boddicker (Missoula ’63)

I was back in Fairbanks, July 1969, after another long and hot fire at Aletna-Alakaket. Four of us walked over to Talon’s Restaurant and Nightclub for dinner and drinks.

Go-go dancers were very popular in 1969 and the go-go dancers in Fairbanks in 1969 were special. The wisdom at the time was this: When Alaskan babes start looking good to you, get on the next plane home. I wasn’t in Fairbanks long enough for the general gal on the street to look great.

Talon’s was rank, in more ways than one. Well into inebriation, I tired of watching the go-go gals wiggle and squirm, trying to keep the Maraschino cherries in their belly-button holes as crazy young men tried to bite them out.

I had clothes to wash, my wife’s mail to re-read, and letters to write. So I staggered up and out into the twilight of a 2 o’clock Fairbanks morning. I can’t remember whether any of my buddies were with me or not.

As I approached the BLM compound, I could hear

and see a very drunk Richard Dick arguing with the security guard at the guardhouse. The conversation was loud and animated and went something like this: "Get the f— out of here, you drunk Skeemo! I'm not going near your g—d—ed tents. If you f——s decide to knife each other, go for it," he yelled.

"This is bad. I'm a cop in Kotzebue. I need help. You're a cop. Help me," Richard Dick pleaded in a halting, inebriated voice to the security guard.

"Hey, Richard. What's going on?" I asked loudly.

"This cop won't help me. There is some bad s— about to happen and I need help," he said, slurring his words and unsteady on his feet.

"If this drunk SOB doesn't get the f— out of here soon, I'm calling the Fairbanks cops and have him hauled off to jail," the security guard thundered.

"Hey, I know this guy. I've been on a fire with him and he is okay. What's his trouble?" I asked.

"You are as drunk as he is, you dumb s—. I'm not doing nothin' for either of you," he yelled.

"Hey man, I'm not so drunk I can't tell when somebody needs help. I'm not so drunk that if something bad comes down, I won't be able to identify you as the arrogant SOB who refused to do his duty. You got that?" I yelled back. "Let's hear him out."

"Okay, but make it quick. My next move is to call the cops," he hollered.

"Hey, Richard. What's the problem?" I asked.

"Some dumb boss decided to treat us Inuit and the Indians equal, the Inuit to bunk on one side of the bunk tents and the Athabaskan Indians on the other side. We been killing each other for 500 years. We are about to start up another fight," he said in an anxious and agitated way.

"What can we do about it?" I asked.

"We need to move the Indians into their own tent and us Inuit into our own tent," he replied. "It will be dangerous. Everyone's been drinking. They're in an ugly mood."

"Officer, will you go to the tents and try to straighten this out?" I asked.

"F—, no!" he yelled. "I'm not risking my neck for this mess."

"Can I try?" I asked.

"You are drunk as a skunk. What do you think you can do about it anyway?" he answered angrily.

"I've worked with half of these guys so I might be able to pull it off. What the hell? I'll give it a try," I finished. The security guard didn't reply.

"Hey Richard, let's go," I motioned to Richard. I'm not sure how to describe a drunken, charcoal-covered, smelly Kotzebue cop, but he looked relieved and bewildered.

We walked haltingly, that three-quarter-to-passing-out weave, up to the first tent. As we walked, I asked Richard essential questions like: "Who is in charge of the Inuits? The Athabascans? Can they order things to happen? How should we go about this so the top doesn't blow off? Do they have weapons?"

"Yes, knives at least," Richard replied.

Richard could order the Inuit. He didn't know the Athabaskan chief or what authority he had. If he knew what to do, he would have already done it, he said.

So, we stood outside the tent. I was scared s—less, to coin the best adjective for the time and situation.

"Okay, Richard. Here's what we do. We duck into the first tent. You go first (basically so you get knifed or shot before I do). You say, 'Listen up. Smokejumper boss Boddicker knows there needs to be a change in who is in this tent.' I will then take over.

"I will ask the Athabaskan chief to step forward. I will toss a coin and the chief will call it. The winner gets to call whether the Inuit move or the Athabascans move. We will do the same at the next tent. Think that will work?" I asked.

"Yeah, I think it will," Richard replied.

"Which tent is the Athabaskan chief in?" I asked.

"The second tent," he replied.

"So, we get to give the speech twice," I remarked. "Oh, s—. Let's go."

Richard ducked into the tent. It was about 2:30 a.m. The tent smelled like strong pig feces, smoke, stale booze breath, and gas, CRIPES! The tension in the tent was hard. There was an audible buzzing moan going on in the background. In the dim light of a dying Coleman lantern, the faces looked lethal.

Richard said firmly, "Listen up. Smokejumper boss Boddicker knows there needs to be a change in who is in this tent. You know or have heard about smokejumper boss Boddicker."

Then he spoke in the Inuit language, so I didn't recognize what he said. My guess is he said something similar to this: "He is one tough f——r, so listen up and do what he says." Or it could have been this: "This stupid jerk thinks he can clean up this miserable stuff, so play along." It could have been either.

I then asked in a firm, clear voice, "Is the Athabaskan chief here?"

"Next tent," someone replied.

"Here is how it's going to be. The Athabaskan chief and Richard Dick will call a coin I will toss. The winner decides who moves and who stays. The Inuit all move in the same tent, Athabascans in the other tent. Stay put until we know who will move," I said.

Okay, I know and you know that was bull—, but a small sleight of hand is often necessary. These

guys really wanted an excuse not to fight. So, shift the responsibility to whomever will take it.

Richard and I ducked out and moved to the second tent and repeated the introduction. A very young Athabascan kid stepped forward as the chief. It was an insult to us, but I decided to try to make it work.

Richard whispered, "This isn't the chief – this is the lowest guy they have." I stuck out my hand and the Athabascan chief, a kid about 16 years old, reluctantly put his hand forward with a limp handshake.

"Thanks for stepping up young man. What's your name?"

"Henry," was the reply.

I explained to Henry the process, and he agreed.

"Chief Henry, this is Kotzebue officer Richard Dick. Thank you for assisting us in dealing with this." There were several *haw-haws* from the Athabascan side.

"I will toss this quarter. Chief Henry will call it. Heads or tails, the winner decides who moves," I instructed.

I tossed the quarter and spotlighted it in my flashlight beam on the tent floor. Chief Henry called tails, and tails it was. Henry declared the Inuit were to move, as expected.

The Inuit agreed to move. So it was only a diplo-

matic win for the Athabascans because half of them had to move too.

Tent No. 2 Inuit moved to tent No. 1. Athabascans moved to tent No. 2. Richard, Chief Henry and I supervised until the men and their gear were all settled. The crisis was over; nobody got hurt.

"Chief Henry, you are a wise leader. Good luck, Henry. Hope to see you on a fire somewhere." I shook his hand.

He gave me a huge grin. The Indians laughed about the joke the Athabascans had pulled off on me. Richard and I laughed too, out of relief and at the irony of the stupid situation.

"Be proud of yourself, Richard. How many men did you keep from getting knifed tonight?" I congratulated him. "If I get a chance, I will write a great efficiency report on you." I never saw either man again.

"Sweet Jesus, I dodged the bullet again," I thought as I walked a bit steadier. I remembered thinking I would probably get my butt chewed for countermanding an order. Emergency has a way of sobering one up. I jogged to the loft because I had to pee, badly.

The experience and fear were strong enough that even though I was drunk, I can remember the details like it was yesterday, 42 years later. 🍷

LETTER FROM APOLLO ASTRONAUT ROOSA'S FAMILY

The following letter was sent from the family of Apollo 14 Command Module Pilot Stuart Roosa (CJ-53) to the participants in the annual "Moon Tree Run" held at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Museum on June 7, 2014.

On behalf of the Stuart A. Roosa family, we wish to thank you for participating in this great event.

My father was many things: Astronaut, fighter pilot, big game hunter, fisherman, outdoorsman and family man. He might be asked to speak about many things; but he loved to talk about being a smokejumper. On the wall of our house growing up in Houston, he had many plaques and tributes from Heads of State and numerous organizations from around the world.

However, there was only one picture of him hanging on the wall. No picture of him in his space suit, no pictures of him in the Oval Office with Presidents, no pictures of him with Kings and Queens, just one picture of him at Cave Junction, Oregon. In the center of the wall, amongst all these recognitions, was a framed 5x7

picture of him in a parachute doing a training jump at Cave Junction.

Of his three sons, two went on to fight forest fires with the Forest Service while in college. All three became Airborne qualified and wore their jump wings with pride. His stories inspired us.

He credited the Forest Service for giving him self confidence, getting him into good physical shape, and training him to overcome his apprehension of jumping out of an airplane, crashing through trees and avoiding boulders on the ground, and finding his way back to civilization. It was because of these lessons that he wanted to pay tribute to the Forest Service during his Moon flight. Therefore, the reason for the idea of Moon Trees was born.

Many of you in the audience share the same passion as my father. We commend all of you for the work you do for this country.

For those of you who just finished the run, to quote my father, "Its time for a cold one."

—Colonel Christopher Roosa USMC (Ret) 🍷

Former Jumper Beasley Honored For His Secret Tibet Missions With CIA

by Marga Lincoln

(Copyright 2014, the Helena Independent-Record.)

They were sworn to secrecy. In fact, they couldn't use their real names. Their story went untold for more than 50 years.

Now, **Ray Beasley** (MYC-52) and four of his smokejumper buddies from Montana and Idaho were invited to Washington, D.C., and finally recognized for their secret CIA missions over Tibet in the 1950s and '60s.

For the first time, Beasley has begun sharing his story with his family – most recently with two of his adult daughters during a visit at his home in Helena, Mont., in June.

Beasley was among those feted at a May 5 reception at the CIA Museum in Washington, D.C., to see the unveiling of a painting: “Khampa Airlift to Tibet.”

The work by Dru Blair, now on display in the museum, shows a C-130 transport flying into a valley of the Himalayans – dropping Tibetan parachutists and supplies – with the mountains bathed in light from the full moon. It commemorates the secret Tibetan missions.

With that invitation, Beasley has finally been able to talk about a chapter of his life he never before shared – not even with his wife and children.

The story begins when Beasley, who was 29 and a laid-off smokejumper in McCall, Idaho, got a phone call in 1959.

“Would you like a job that pays \$850 a month?” the caller asked.

Soon, Beasley and a cowboy by the name of **Tommy “Shep” Johnson** (MYC-56), who would later become one of his close friends, were on their way to the nation's capitol.

They had been “referred” by an insider to “The Company,” the term they used for the CIA.

“That's the only way you got into this line of work,” Beasley said. This wasn't a job that was advertised. They came looking for you.

Beasley took on the alias Ray Barbon, a name that he sometimes struggled to remember. He almost missed a flight when he ignored an airport page before he realized it was for him.

“They told us only what we needed to know,” Beasley said.

Beasley was a “kicker” on CIA missions in Tibet, Laos and the Bay of Pigs invasion. He literally “kicked” the parachute-equipped supply boxes out of the transport aircraft as they circled their secret drop sites. He also helped “kick” out parachuted commandos and hooked up parachutes to the loads.

The Tibetan story, in many ways, begins in 1950 when China invaded the country of Tibet and, in 1951, marched into the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, forcing the government of the Dalai Lama to sign a so-called peace plan for the “liberation” of Tibet, according to a 2006 article from *Military History* magazine.

The 14th Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, was spirited secretly out of Lhasa March 17, 1959, and eventually into India. Tibetan resistance fighters trained by the CIA were among the group escorting him to India, according to the article. Three days later, when the Chinese discovered he had slipped away, they allegedly executed Lhasa civilians, whose bodies “were reportedly stacked like cordwood in the streets.”

Altogether, 259 Tibetans were secretly trained by the CIA at Camp Hale, Colo., according to the article.

And it was Beasley and his fellow smokejumpers who were involved in dropping the trained Tibetan commandos back into Tibet along with pallets of weapons, supplies and radio equipment.

Tibet, at that time, was described as “near-mythical” and unknown to much of the world. Even Allen Dulles, the CIA director of the time, was reported to have trouble finding it on a map – he thought it was near Hungary.

Soon, Beasley and his buddies would be quite familiar with Tibet's location, particularly the high mountainous region of the Himalayas where they made their secret runs on the nights of the full moon.

“Eisenhower was gung-ho to train the Tibetans at Camp Hale, Colo.,” said Beasley. But there was a slight complication. “They can't speak English,” he said, “and we can't talk to the Tibetans.”

Once Khampa commandos were trained, they were airdropped into Tibet – with cyanide pills strapped to their wrists, should they be caught.

“We were always ‘Romeo,’” Beasley said of the

code name for their mission. "When we did these jobs, it was in the full moon and we flew right by Everest."

"We were descending down to 13,000 to 15,000 feet (to fly over high-elevation drop sites). They marked it with a big 'T' with lights," he said.

"We were allowed one pass," he said. "We dropped the agents first," followed by the parachuted pallets of supplies.

Beasley always carried a "blood chit," a small piece of cloth offering a reward for returning him to the U.S. government, in case he was found or captured – if he ever had to exit the plane in an emergency or it was shot down.

In Beasley's case, however, his Tibet adventures were totally airborne. He never set foot in Tibet.

"I'm just delighted the CIA honored him and the others," said **John Driscoll** (MSO-68), a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives and himself a former smokejumper and a collector of smokejumper oral histories.

"Smokejumpers, because they are so skilled at parachute dropping and handling, were always in demand by the CIA," he said.

"All these people kept their mouths shut," he said. "There were only five of them left," although at least a dozen had been involved in the Tibetan operation.

As far as Driscoll knows, 82 smokejumpers were involved with the CIA in some way. It's something that is known in circles of smokejumpers out in the hills,

he said, but not by the public. "I'm so pleased they are finally being recognized," he said.

Beasley quit the CIA missions in 1961. "I wanted to get married," he said. He'd been living out of a suitcase for three years.

When they weren't flying, they were back at the base gambling and drinking, and he was sick of that.

To shake up the routine, Beasley took up snake collecting – that is, until he was called to remove a cobra from a wood pile.

"They had pissed him off," said Beasley. "It was a spitting cobra. He hit me above the eyes," temporarily blinding him. "That was the last snake hunting."

Beasley had also become disillusioned with the CIA, particularly with how it treated some of its veterans.

When he came home, he went back to work for the U.S. Forest Service, winding up in Missoula, where he ran the textile lab.

"I designed and manufactured the 'Shake-n-Bake' bags," which are emergency shelters used by firefighters, he said. He also sewed the prototypes for fire-suppression uniforms and designed the specifications for the FS-10 parachute system.

He said his standout memories from his 40 missions, which took him not only to Tibet but also Laos and the Bay of Pigs, are about the "companionship."

His only regret was that more of his buddies weren't alive to finally receive some of the recognition due them. 🕊

Fate Is The Hunter-The Death Of Jim Edison

by **Chuck Sheley** (Cave Junction '59)

Keeping the obit records of the National Smokejumper Association depends upon the membership and friends getting obituary information to my desk. The obit is then written for *Smokejumper* magazine and put on the website master list. Of the 5,000 plus smokejumpers in U.S. history, there are hundreds of deceased for whom I do not have any obits.

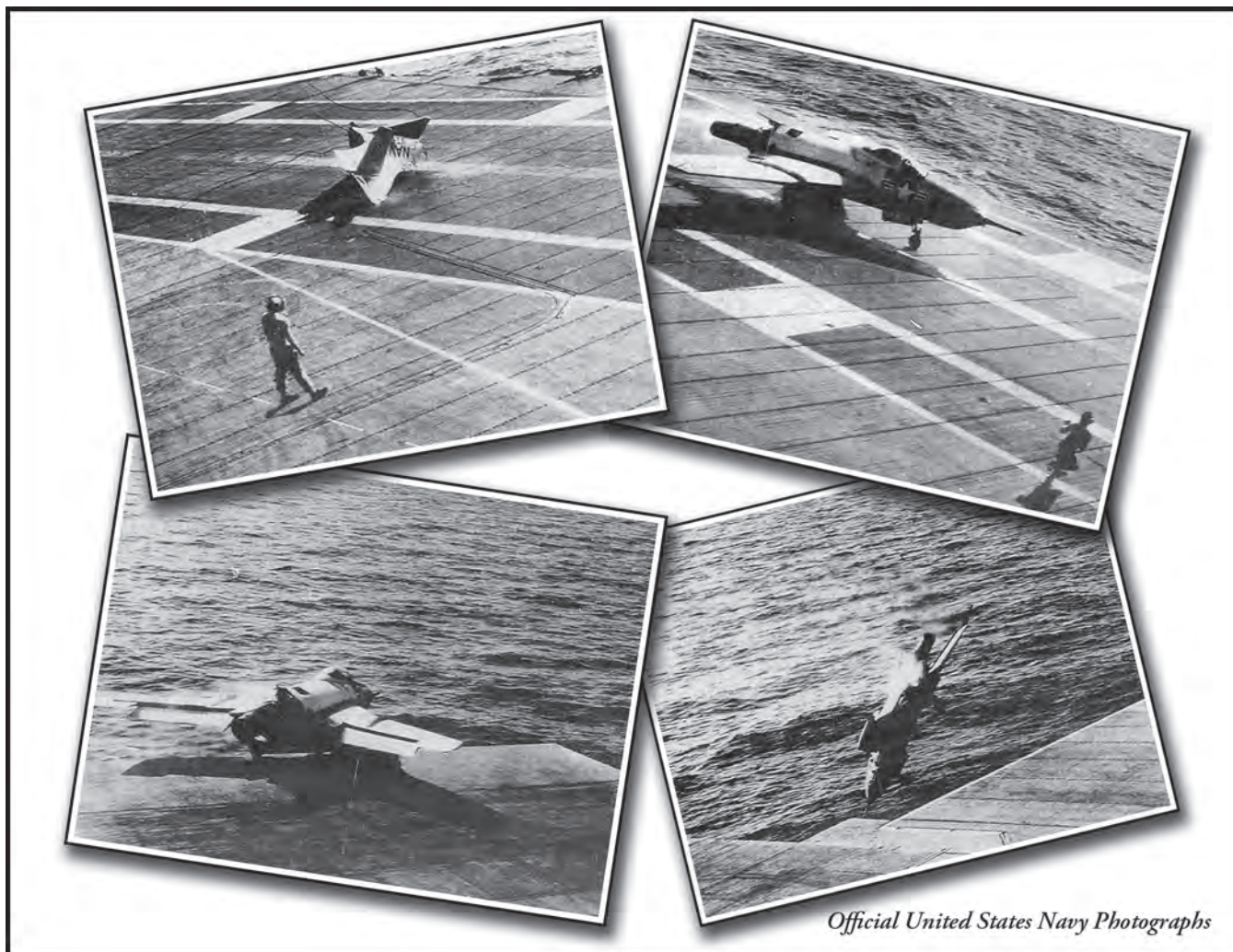
Jim Edison (CJ-56) was one of those until someone sent a copy of the accident report when Jim was killed. Then, thanks to the Internet, Jim Haynes, a retired airline pilot and ex-Naval Aviator, sent me more information and photos of the accident.

From the NSA website:

Marine Lt. James 'Jim' Edison was killed October 2, 1961, when his F9F Cougar went over the side while making a landing on the USS Antietam. The carrier was operating in the Gulf of Mexico and the aircraft and Jim were "lost at sea."

From the email that Jim Hayes sent:

Several years ago another Navy pilot and I discussed the accident involving Edison. We had different memories of the event. I wrote to the Naval History and Heritage Command in Wash-



ington, D. C., asking for the accident report. The Command sent me the attached photos (four frames) and the formal report. The pictures tell everything. No pilot error. I did not know Edison and I did not see the accident, but I was in a Navy airplane in the vicinity and heard the transmissions involving the accident on the carrier's tactical frequency. My personal interest is remembering those who are lost in the service of their fellow citizens. Looking at your website, I see you and your organization have the same interest.

I will summarize the findings of the Accident Review Board:

1. The primary cause was a maintenance error in installing the nut on the disconnect fitting on the tail section of the aircraft.
2. In the opinion of the board, with the present equipment available, it is impossible to apply

the recommended torque to the fitting.

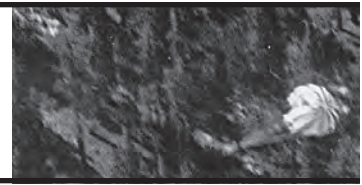
3. The recovery of the pilot's body should have been achieved had the crewmen been familiar with the pilot's equipment and there had been better coordination of the rescue facilities utilized.

4. Ejection from the F9F-8B, even under ideal circumstances, most likely would have resulted in serious or fatal injury due to the large, physical size of the pilot's torso. The design limitation of the aircraft endangers any pilot with torso length of greater than 36" each time he flies the F9F-8B equipped with the Z-5 Martin-Baker seat.

Jim Edison starred in football and basketball at Jacksonville (NC) High School and later in basketball at Louisburg College (NC) where he graduated in 1958. He jumped at CJ for the '56 and '57 seasons. 🏈



THE JUMP LIST



The Jump List is intended to bring you up-to-date on your fellow NSA members. Send your information to Chuck Sheley; see his contact information on page 3 of this magazine.

ROY L. GOSS (North Cascades '46)

Now living in: Okanogan, Wash.

Jumped: NCSB 46

Since jumping: Attended college and university, earning bachelor's degrees in Agriculture and Education, and Ph.D. in Agronomy; taught vocational agriculture in Tenino, Wash.; worked as farm conservationist in Wenatchee, Wash.; attended graduate school, 1955-58; worked as research scientist and extension specialist, 1958-88; was professional consultant, 1988-95; retired at Okanogan, 1995 to present; resource person for master gardeners, 1995-onward.

Roy says: "I made a lot of lifetime friends but our numbers are dwindling. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all."

STARR JENKINS (Cave Junction '48)

Now living in: San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Jumped: CJ 48, MSO 49

Since jumping: Taught high school five years and at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo for 27 years, and have been retired 25 more; married Stella in 1950 and we've had two sons and a daughter plus one granddaughter; wrote many articles plus six books – a few copies left of *Smokejumpers '49 – Brothers in the Sky* and *More Than My Share*, a true adventure: memoir of 27 chapters including "Freefall Over New Mexico," "Parachuting Into Glen Canyon," "Helitack Fire" and "Haydrop on the Gila."

Starr says: "We all know that smokejumping was the best job we've ever had, and that it set us up for life as very special cats who went on to do great things in many fields. It helped me get summer jobs as a park ranger in Yosemite National Park and to fly in the summer air patrol in Coeur d'Alene National Forest, among other things. And it makes us all wonder if the "let the fires burn" philosophy is really right for our great American forests.

WALTER BRAFFORD (McCall '49)

Now living in: Springfield, Mo.

Jumped: MYC 49, 54-55

Since jumping: Served 30 years as TWA pilot; retired 27 years.

JOE RUMBLE (Missoula '49)

Now living in: Monitor, Wash.

Jumped: MSO 49-51

Since jumping: Finished college training in Mining Engineering and Metallurgy, then pursued my chosen field of work; moved to California for a short stay, then to Yerington, Nev., for three years; Boise was the next stop, then to Hells Canyon Dams, then to Wenatchee, Wash., and 31 years with Alcoa; finished my professional career in Vancouver, Wash., after four years.

ROY BELLI (Cave Junction '51)

Now living in: Lancaster, Pa.

Jumped: CJ 51

Since jumping: Served 30 years on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps; 10 years as adjunct faculty, Northern Virginia Community College; spent the last 20 years enjoying retirement – travel, bowling, bridge.

JOHN "JACK" COBURN (Idaho City '53)

Now living in: Midvale, Idaho

Jumped: IDC 53, 56

Since jumping: Served two years in the U.S. Army Combat Engineers, 16 months in Korea and two years in the Idaho National Guard in fire and crash; was a truck driver for 30 years, driving 3 million miles; retired in 1996; bought a small farm and moved to Midvale, Idaho. **Jack says:** "At 79, I'm still going strong and enjoy hunting and fishing."

BUD FILLER (McCall '52)

Now living in: Boise, Idaho

Jumped: MYC 52-54

Since jumping: Co-founded and owner of Filler King Co. of Homedale, Idaho, manufacturer of structured timbers; sold to Boise Cascade Corp. in 2011; now writing fiction.

CARL DEWARD (Missoula '51)

Now living in: Lewiston, Idaho

Jumped: MSO 51

Since jumping: Earned bachelor's degree in Forest Management from Utah State University in 1951 and was jumping when recalled into the military during the Korean conflict, having already served four years as a U.S. Navy combat air crewman during World War II, earning the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross;

after two years as maintenance and range officer at Indian Springs Air Force Base in Nevada, joined Potlatch Corporation as a log scaler; was transferred to the forestry department and worked as forester, timber cruiser, log buyer and power sawyer, as well as coming down on one of the Clearwater River log drives; was named assistant managing forester in 1961 and became logging superintendent in 1964; was promoted to logging manager for the Northern Units in 1973; was named resource operations manager in 1978 and was responsible for

Idaho log production and road construction, holding this job until retiring in 1984; served as director of Inland Forest Resource Council, Intermountain Logging Conference and the Pacific Logging Conference; served as vice president of Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protective Association and was first president of Dworshak Log Users Association.

Carl says: "Retirement has generally been good, but not wonderful. I'm no longer able to hunt, but still fish for steelhead on the Clearwater and Snake rivers." 🐟

Alaska Fire, Tundra Fireline, Fruitcake

by Jerry Hagen (Missoula '75)

We were sent to Alaska in 1976 as a second booster crew to Fairbanks. My first jump was on the Seward Peninsula.

After a day of "swatting" the 20-acre fire and putting it out, the Alaska jumper with us took out his fishing string with a Mepps spinner, and caught several Arctic grayling in the small stream next to the fire.

When it was my turn to try the fishing action, I took the willow pole down to the stream to try my luck. I was amazed that in every small hole, there were fish. The fish were totally unafraid of a human crawling around in the willows next to them.

After I tossed the spinner into a hole and easily caught one, I decided to see how many more Arctic grayling were in the stream. I hopped over the creek and crouched through a small tunnel in the willows. I looked down, and in front of me was a large black bear track in the mud next to the stream.

Upon closer observation, I noticed water was slowly seeping into the depression of the track. The hair on the back of my neck stood up, and I im-

mediately made a retreat back to our jump spot. We were told during our initial briefing that black bears in Alaska are as dangerous as grizzlies, as they are normally totally unaccustomed to humans.

We later jumped a fire on the Brooks Range. After a day of attempting to swat a line around the 60-acre fire, we found that it was so dry that all we were doing was fanning the flames. At that time, the fire became a "priority" fire, and we received a convoy of C-117 tankers.

It looked like we were going to be able to contain it, but then it lost its priority as fast as it gained it. Being frustrated, and being from the "lower 48," we grabbed our pulaskis and tried digging a fireline.

The BLM jumper who was with us said, "It won't work. You can't dig fireline in tundra!" He refused to join us, but with our "can-do" attitudes, we proceeded in our endeavor. After about an hour, and being exhausted, we could see he was right. We had only gotten about 10 yards of line dug. It was like trying to dig fireline through steel wool.

Because of all the fires in Alas-

ka that season, the whole country around our fire got smoked in. We needed to be picked up, as we were not being productive and our fire was a lost cause. The BLM flew over us in a small jet to check on us and told us that the visibility was too poor to be able to send in a helicopter.

Our squad had dropped in with the normal cases of "c-rats," but after several days, we were down to seven cans of "fruitcake." The BLM jumper decided to go down to the stream below us and see if he could catch some fish and, if need be, shoot anything that moved.

It was barely a half-mile to the bottom of the valley, but it took us more than two hours to reach the stream. On the way down, a cow caribou trotted by me like it was walking on air. The BLM jumper either didn't see it or decided it would be better to catch fish. As it turned out, the stream was glacier-fed and was void of fish. The trip back up to the jump spot was worse than the trip down.

Luckily, the fog and smoke lifted the next day and we were airlifted out. To this day, I can't stomach fruitcake! 🐟

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Design & Illustration: Johnny Kirkley (CJ-64)